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DOWN on the OLD PLANTATION



By
Mrs. S.M. Scogin
and
John Dicks Howe



MRS. S. M. SCOGIN

(" Miss Sammie ")

DOWN ON THE OLD PLANTATION

Original Sketches of Every-day Life on a
Mississippi Cotton Plantation

By MRS. S. M. SCOGIN
AND
JOHN DICKS HOWE

SAN FRANCISCO

1908

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P R E F A C E

In May, 1907, we submitted our first dialect story to the San Francisco Chronicle, with the result that it was accepted and arrangements entered into whereby we were to furnish others. Since that time we have furnished the Chronicle with a story of this kind for each Sunday edition, and from the number of compliments received we feel safe in saying that they have been read and appreciated.

With hearts full of affection and pride, we honor every section of our great country, still we must confess that we love our old home better than any other spot on earth—the dear old Sunny South, with its irresistable charms, its dreamy landscapes, fragrant magnolias and sweet-scented roses, Jessamine and honey-suckle; where the mocking bird, the redbird and the oriole sing as sweetly as ever, and the darkies still hunt “de ’possum an’ de coon”; where every heart thrills with pleasure, beats faster, and swells with pride at the sound of the sweetest of all Southern melodies—“Dixie.”

We take this method of publicly expressing our thanks to the Chronicle for the use of many of the illustrations found in this little volume, and to our friends and the public in general we offer this tribute of our deep and lasting love for the dear old Southland.

THE AUTHORS.

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A Visit to My Old Plantation Home

For many a long, weary day had I been pining for a glimpse of this well-remembered, hallowed spot, for the dearest place on earth to me is my old Southern home, with its dark woods bordered by the rushing waters of the grand old Mississippi. To me, there is nothing like the country, nor will there ever be a place that I like better. How fair the early mild winter days in this soft Southern clime—no frosts or cold winds to kill the pretty flowers and leaves; the sumach glowing red and green; the elm, chinquapin and hickory trees green and gold, while others are a dead, dark brown.

Not the least pleasure of travel is the joy of home coming, and I am never happier than when here, among the old-time, faithful darkies who have watched me grow from infancy to womanhood, for they seem so happy as they gather around me when I visit their humble, but neatly-kept cabins.

I had just come down from the kitchen garret, now used only as a storeroom for unused articles, bringing with me as many of my old-time playthings as I could find, and was arranging them on the back porch, to see how they would look to my grown-up eyes, when I was interrupted by my old black nurse, Mammy Mary, exclaiming:

“Why, lawzee, honey! What you doin’, bringin’ all dat old trash down out’n de garret?”

With her head tied up neatly in a gay, red bandana, holding a dust-cloth in her hand, she came to where I was arranging the old-time childish treasures.

“Jes’ come out on de po’ch an’ see what Miss Sammie’s doin’,” she called to the other servants, who were busily engaged about their morning’s work in the big old-fashioned kitchen.



"What you doin', bringin' all dat old trash down out'n de garret?"

"For de Lawd sake!" exclaimed old Aunt Tilda, coming forward and shading her aged dim eyes with one hand from the glare of the bright morning sun. "I ain't seed dat little red rockin' chair befo' in more'n twenty years, an' dere's dat little split-bottom white oak doll rocker what Uncle Hans made fer you one Christmus when you wuz jes' gittin' big enuff to begin to play wid yer dolls. Dere's dat little wooden spoon an' mixin' bowl what he made for you to mix yer mud pies in, an' I do decla' ef I hadn't plumb furgot 'bout dat little wooden doll cradle what Uncle Hans dug out'n er slab of er poplar tree what wuz lef' over from makin' Aunt Patience's mixin' bowl. Yassum, I 'members how 'ticular he wuz 'bout gittin' dem rockers on straight, jes' lak hit wuz to rock er sho' 'nuff baby in, an' how he tied er strong piece of cord to de side of hit, so dat you could pull hit an' rock yer doll babies to sleep. Many is de time dat de sand man ketched you an' took you wid him to de slumber land, while you'd be er rockin' in dat little red rocker what uster hold yer tiny form, when you wuz big enuff to leave Mammy Mary's faithful, lovin' old arms.

"Yassum," continued Aunt Tilda, "po' Uncle Hans wuz pow'ful handy wid tools, an' 'twas him dat made all dem bread trays an' biscuit boa'ds an' mixin' bowls an' ironin' boa'ds what we uses in de kitchen now, kase dey never wears out an' gits busted lak de sto' boughten ones does, an' he uster allus be er makin' something for you when you got big enuff to play wid 'em. Well does I 'member de time, honey, when he wuz er wuckin' on dat little round tea table an' dem six little straight-back wooden chairs settin' over dere by dat pos'. Yassum, he made 'em all at night, an' I 'members how his wrinkled old face would beam an' his old eyes would glow as he whittled erway in front of de kitchen fire, an' how he'd laff while talkin' 'bout how 'sprised you'd be on Christmus mornin', when you'd git up an' find 'em settin' under yer little white stockin's er hangin' on

de end of de high mantle, whar Mammy Mary had helt you up so dat you could hang 'em wid yer own han's. You sho' wuz proud of 'em, chile, an' you loved all yer playthings, no matter ef dey wuz home-made an'—dar now, ef I ain't gone an made you cry, by talkin' all dis foolishness. Don't cry, honey, kase we don't care how many of de old playthings dat you fetches down, kase we all laks to look at 'em."

"Dar's dat little red tin bucket what you uster call yer milk bucket," cried 'Lias, examining it carefully.

"Does yer 'member de time, Miss Sammie, when you an' Zan went out in de pasture, to whar old Rose wuz er browsin', an' how you went up to her on de wrong side, tellin' Zan to watch you milk dat cow? Old Rose wuzn't used to bein' milked on de wrong side, an' you hadn't more'n touched her bag befo' she up wid her foot an' kicked you 'longside de hade so hard dat you didn't know er thing till Zan dragged you mos' to de house, he er hollerin' an' er cryin' loud as he could. Yer ma an' Mammy Mary both thought dat er snake had bit you, so Mammy grabbed de bottle of turpentine an' er bundle of white bandages dat she allus kept handy on de pantry shelf. All de niggers at de house followed her as she runned to whar you wuz, while Uncle Jack wuz er puttin' de saddle on old Jim Harper, so's to be ready to go fer de doctor. When we found dat hit wuzn't no wuss den er knot what wuz raised on yer hade by old Rose, de gentles' cow on de plantashun, we wuz at er loss to know what to make out'n hit till you opened yer little black eyes an' asked me to go back an' git yer little milk bucket what you drapped when de cow kicked you. Dat sho' wuz er lesson to you, kase you never tried to milk no mo' cows from dat day to dis."

"See here, honey!" exclaimed Aunt Tilda, as she held in her hand a little sheep that she discovered among my treasures. "Does yer 'member how you uster play wid Nannie, an' how you uster holler

'M-a-a-h!' when you'd be 'tendin' dat she dun los' her ma? I 'member de time when Uncle Jack went to Natchez wid ole Marsa, an' how he laffed when he comed back an' showed us de little woolly sheep dat he buyed for you, kase hit wuz nigh yer buthday, an' how he went out in de back yard an' put hit in er chinaberry tree, tellin' you dat all little sheeps growed on trees, an' how yer little eyes did sparkle when he clumb de tree an' drapped hit in yer little white apron. Does yer 'member de time, honey, when you wuz er chasin' Zan, wid yer little lammie under yer arm, how you fell an' broke little Nannie's hade off, an' how you runned to de stable an' wanted Uncle Jack to hitch up er buggy an' drive you to de doctor, an' how happy you wuz when Uncle Hans glued de hade on for you?"

"Well, ef here ain't old Black Topsy, de old wooden doll what you uster call yer doll's nuss," cried Aunt Patience, coming out of the kitchen, holding aloft my favorite doll.

"Where did you find her?" I asked, as the tears gathered in my eyes.

"Packed erway down in de bottom of dat old hair-covered doll trunk, wid her clothes all wrinkled up," she answered, handing me my old treasure. "I sho' would er knowed her anywhar, wid her blue bead earrings an' red nose an' mouth. Lawd, honey," she continued, "does yer 'member de time when you uster set her in dat little doll rocker, placin' er little china doll what you called one of de twins in her lap? Den you'd take de udder one, an' whilst you'd be er rockin' hit, you'd be er tellin' Black Topsy to be mighty keerful an' not drap de baby. I 'members one day, when you comed out in de kitchen, cryin' hard as you could, draggin' old Black Topsy by one arm, an' how you told Mammy Mary to git de smoke-house key an' come wid you, kase you wanted to lock de old nuss up in hit fer er whole week, sayin' dat she dun drapped de twins an' broke de arm of one of 'em. Den, after



"Packed erway down in de bottom of dat old hair-covered doll trunk."

lockin' Black Topsy up, how you went back to de twin an' sent for de doctor, an' how we did laff when yer brother Zan, who allus played lak he wuz de doctor, comed er ridin' down de back po'ch on dat old iron shovel what he used fer er hoss, wearin' dem sheepskin whiskers what 'Lias made for him, carryin' his saddle bags filled wid medicine in front of him. After he dun 'tended lak he set de doll's arm, an' Mammy Mary glued hit in place, you wuz all smiles ergin, tellin' Mammy Mary to go wid you to git de pris'ner out er jail, you er sayin' dat any nuss wuz liable to drap er baby sometimes, no matter how keerful dey wuz, 'specially ef hit wuz crupy an' wouldn't sit still. Den you'd hug dat old black doll, kissin' her lak you hadn't seed her in er month, an' I uster laff when I heard you say to her: 'You didn't mean to drap dat baby, did you, Topsy?' You sho' did lak dat old black doll better'n any of dem fine wax an' china dolls what Miss Frances uster buy for you in Natchez an' New Orleans, an' I b'lieve you loves her yet," she added, as she noted with what tenderness I smoothed out the time-yellowed white apron and cap strings.

"Yes," I answered, "I think I loved Black Topsy the best of any doll I ever possessed," at which Aunt Patience and the rest of the servants laughed heartily.

"Whar'd you git her, Miss Sammie?" asked Lucetta, the young housemaid, who was an interested spectator, as she took Black Topsy from my hands and looked her over curiously.

"Uncle Hans made dat doll for Miss Sammie long befor' you wuz born or ever thought of, chile," answered Aunt Tilda.

"Hit's no wonder dat Miss Sammie laked her, kase she could fling her 'round jes' anyway an' not break her, but she sho' ain't much fer beauty," commented the young darkey.

"Well, no matter, I loved her anyway," was my reply, "even if she would not count for much as a

prize winner in a beauty show. I loved all my playthings, and no toys, no matter how costly, were ever appreciated or enjoyed more than these rude ones, made for me by faithful, devoted old black hands that have long since gone to their reward in a brighter, better world."

"Dar, now, honey, don't cry no mo'," said Mammy Mary, as she noticed tear after tear coursing down my cheeks. "I 'lows de sight of all dese playthings do bring back old mem'ries of de happy days when we wuz all here together. In dem days dere warn't no separations, only durin' de school months, an' den what times we'd have when you all comed home for yer vacations an' at Christmus. Dey makes me think of de old times, too, honey, when I uster take you in my arms an' rock you to sleep, jes' lak you did yer dollies. You'd sing de same songs to dem what I allus sung to you, an' you'd scold 'em jes' lak I did you, an' many is de time dat me an' Aunt Tilda would hide ourselves, jes' to hear what you'd say to 'em, an' how we'd both laff when we'd hear you sing:

"'Shet yer little eyes fer de by-lo-lan', my honey,
Shet yer little eyes fer de by-lo-lan', my baby.'

"Den you'd tell 'em to stop singin' wid you an' shut dem eyes an' go to sleep, kase you wanted to git ready an' go to chuch, jes' lak I talked to you on Sunday nights, when hit wuz mos' chuch time an' you didn't want to go to sleep. When I'd git you ready fer bed, I'd set down in de big armchair to rock you to sleep, an' I allus 'lowed you to sing wid me, less'n hit wuz Sunday night an' I wuz in er hurry to git you to sleep, so's to be ready by de time Sis Calline an' Aunt Tilda wuz ready to start. Whilst I'd be er singin':

"'Shet yer little eyes fer de by-lo-lan', honey.'
You'd sing, too; den I'd scold you an' tell you dat I wanted you to hurry up an' go to sleep. Sometimes you'd have one han' 'ginst my cheek, whilst you'd be er holdin' yer tiny foot in de udder, whisperin' right easy, so dat you thought I wouldn't hear you:

“‘Shet——little——fer——by-lo-lan’-----baby.’

When I’d scold you ergin, tellin’ you dat Gawd wuzn’t er ‘gwine to love er little gal what wouldn’t go to sleep an’ let her po’ old black mammy go to chuch, den you’d hush up an’ shet yer eyes dat tight dat you couldn’t prize ‘em open wid er stick; den I’d take you upstairs an’ tuck you in yer little white bed, kneelin’ down an’ pattin’ you into er sound sleep, whilst I’d be er prayin’ dat de good Lawd would watch over you, protectin’ an’ keepin’ you from all harm.

“I allus made hit er rule to pat you fer er little while after I dun laïd you in yer bed, kase you’d allus wake up ef I didn’t, an’ for many er year after you wuz too big to be rocked, I’d kneel down by yur bed, even when I wuz wid you in de boa’din’-school, pattin’ you to sleep whilst I’d sing de same lullaby dat I sung to you when you wuz er little baby.

“Even now, honey, I often dreams dat I’s e er pattin’ you to sleep,” continued Mammy Mary, wiping big tears from her old eyes. “I often wakes up from er dream, thinkin’ dat I’m er kneelin’ down by de side of yer little bed, singin’ an’ pattin’ you to sleep, an’ one night, not long ago, I waked myself up er singing’ in my dreams:

“‘Shet yer little eyes fer de by-lo-lan’, my honey.’

“Yassum, I sho’ am glad when you comes home, kase it seems lak old times when you’re here wid us,” said my faithful old nurse, who still loves me, despite the weary years that have elapsed since she used to sing her own quaint lullaby as she alone could croon it.

Memory will never grow so faint as to forget the old plantation home, with its tender ties, around which my most sacred thoughts love to linger. Yet how changed it is since the faces that lighted it are gone and the voices that cheered it are forever stilled in its dear old walls. The Southern mocking birds sing their merry songs as sweetly as of old in the thick clump of low-limbed cedars, where in childhood’s happy days the

rabbits always hid a nest at Easter time; the gentle turtle doves still coo their tender melody as softly as ever in the trees overhead, while a great cluster of golden chrysanthemums, with a sprinkling of purple ones, stand in the same old place just outside my bedroom window, their blossoms almost too heavy to be supported by their slender stems, weighted down 'neath their own beauty. The sweet fragrance of the magnolia is wafted through the open door, mingled with the odor of the sweet briar 'neath the kitchen window, while from the darkey quarters in the distance comes the sound of merry laughter and fragments of old-time, familiar plantation songs which I loved so well in those halcyon days.

But oh, how things have changed! I leaned back in my chair with a sigh as I realized that the old-time, happy days are gone and can never, never come back again. There is an intangible something wanting, making my longed-for home-coming incomplete.



The Tragic Death of Old Luke

It was the day before Thanksgiving, and the darkies on the famous old Briers plantation were happy in anticipation of the many good things promised them by "Marse" Frank, the owner of the vast acres. The first streak of dawn creeping over the distant hills found them astir, the men chopping wood and carrying water, while the women busied themselves among the pots and kettles in the mellow glow of their fire-lit cabins, preparing the morning meal for those whose duties called them to the fields of cotton.

In the cabin occupied by Uncle Gabe and Aunt Patience half a dozen rollicking pickaninnies were tumbling over one another in front of the blazing logs, laughing gleefully at the roaring flames and bright sparks leaping up the broad chimney, while a couple of mangy hounds were curled up near a hair-covered trunk, upon which was perched an old speckled rooster which the day before had been crippled by one of the mules stepping on its leg.

"Is termorrow Christmus, granny?" inquired Christopher Napoleon, one of Aunt Patience's grandchildren, when the latter announced that breakfast would soon be ready.

"No, chile, hit won't be Christmus for er long time yet; tomorrow's Thanksgiving," answered Aunt Patience.

"What is Thanksgivin,' granny, an' does we have any firecrackers?" questioned Henry Clay, rolling his big round eyes until the whites alone were visible.

"Thanksgivin' is der day what de President dun set aside in his approximation for us all to give thanks fer de many blessings dat de Lawd dun 'stowed on us durin' de yeah," explained Aunt Patience. "I certainly

does feel powerful thankful dat none ob you tarnacious niggahs ain't been killed or crippled, 'cause youse always up to some debilmint, an' hit's jes' owin' to de good Lawd's will dat yer hain't bin killed long ergo. No, Marse Frank won't 'low no firecrackers on de plantashun tomorrow, but we sho' is er gwine ter have big doin's an' lots er turkey meat."

"Is yer gwine ter kill ole Hezekiah, what Marse Frank's dun had in de pen so long?" inquired Salina Jane, snatching one of her stockings which another pickaninny was endeavoring to put on.

"Don't ax me, chile; you'll have to find dat out frum 'Lias, kase he's dun got his 'orders 'bout which turkeys Miss Genie wants killed," was the answer.

Without stopping to eat the breakfast she had hurriedly prepared for the others, Aunt Patience and Lucetta hastily threw their woolen shawls over their heads and started for the "White House," to superintend the preparation of the morning meal for the white folks. As they passed along the negro quarters Aunt Tilda's shrill voice could be heard, singing:

"Fly, skeeter, high; git my foot on de back ob a skeeter's neck an' make dat skeeter fly."

One and all had good reasons for being happy on this bright, crisp November morning, for the day before "Marse" Frank had announced that the darkies might clear out the big barn, invite the negroes from the adjoining plantations and enjoy an old-fashioned dance, to be followed by a midnight supper.

Both Aunt Mary and Aunt Patience had been empowered with full authority to prepare refreshments that would eclipse anything of the kind ever given on Briers plantation, and as soon as breakfast was over they began preparations by beating eggs, grating sweet potatoes which were to be made into immense rich puddings, seeding raisins for the mince pies, rolling ginger-bread dough and cutting the cakes into grotesque figures, later baking them to a rich golden brown

in the huge hot oven. Over in one corner of the kitchen three little pickaninnies were grouped, one busily engaged in "sopping" a skillet in which ham had been cooked, the second munching crisp ham skins, while the third was scraping the dish in which the cake batter had been mixed. So busy were they all that they did not hear 'Lias, the "house man" on the plantation, until he stuck his head through one of the kitchen windows and asked if they were all asleep.

"What's de mattah wid you people in heah?" he shouted, glancing inquiringly at the two cooks. "Fo' Gawd, I'se been er squawlin' my lungs clean out tryin' fer to git you niggahs ter come out heah in de barnyard an' hep me 'cide which ob de gobblers ter kill. Hit's high time I was er gittin' 'em picked an dressed, so's to put 'em ter roastin' de fust thing in de mawnin'. Ef we kills ole Luke, he'll have ter be put in de oven bright an' early, keze he sho'ly am er tuff ole cuss. I, fer one, am mighty glad he's gwine ter git it in de neck, kase he's de—"

"But he's not going to get it in the neck," cried Walter, the plantation owner's nephew, as he sprang through the open door upon hearing 'Lias' statement. "Aunt Tilda gave Luke to me when he was nothing but a little downy bunch of fuzz, and he's not going to furnish meat for any Thanksgiving dinner while I'm around to protect him," he added, giving 'Lias a savage look.

Five minutes later, when 'Lias headed the procession to the barnyard, it was with some misgivings, for he had been ordered by the manager's wife, whom the darkies all called "Miss Genie," to select the fattest and oldest gobblers, and old Luke was by long odds the fattest and proudest one in the lot. There were good reasons why he should be fat, for Walter never left the table without providing a treat for his pet, often taking such a quantity of food that Aunt Patience would soundly lecture him for his extravagance.

"Fer de Lawd sake, see dat chile er totin' out enough vittels to feed er hawg," she would often exclaim.

Walter was the first to reach the barnyard, and when he saw the darkies coming he put his arms protectingly about his pet gobbler, telling him not to be at all afraid. as he would see that no harm came to him.

"Why, Luke," he said, hugging his pet affectionately, "I could no more eat you than I could one of my little playmates. Nobody but that old pig-headed 'Lias would want to chop your head off, and he's not going to do it. This old barnyard would be a mighty lonesome place if you were not here to make it lively strutting around and gobbling from morning until night, making all the other lazy old gobblers look like a tin spoon in a baby's mouth. Here they come. Stick close to me, Luke, and you'll be all right."

"Jes' see dat ole Luke er scrutchin' up to dat chile," remarked Aunt Patience, nudging Aunt Mary. "Dat ole gobbler knows dat hit's Thanksgivin' an' dat he's in danger ob losin' his haid, but dat chile sho' does think er lot of old Luke."

Despite the orders of the mistress to kill the oldest and fattest gobblers, younger and poorer ones were selected. For three years Luke had been monarch of the barnyard, and when he strutted by on his usual morning parade all the other fowls stopped their busy scratching to watch him as he proudly marched back and forth, scraping the tender grass with his long, glossy wings and drawing his snout down until it lay upon his brown-feathered neck.

Luke was not at all timid; in fact, he was almost too fearless at times for his own good, having had several narrow escapes from being killed by some of the vicious mules that objected to the familiar manner in which he approached them and picked flies off their hind legs. His great activity, however, always saved him, and Walter enjoyed many a hearty laugh while watching Luke creep back for another fly. The gobbler was

always exceedingly cautious upon the second approach, stretching his neck as far forward as possible and jerking his head back before the mule had a chance to strike him with his heavy iron-shod heels.

Walter's cousin, Daisy Holmes of Natchez, was visiting on the plantation, it being her intention to return to her home soon after the festivities, to prepare for her wedding. Jack Duncan, Daisy's fiance, had planned to spend Thanksgiving on Briers and was due to arrive on the "Betsy Ann" that afternoon.

About noon, when the darkies announced that the smoke from the boat could be seen in the bend above the plantation, Daisy was in tears and deep distress, for the reason that she had, in some unaccountable manner, either misplaced or lost the diamond ring which Jack had given her early in the spring. For many months it had been a constant reminder of the happy days to come, and it seldom happened that she left it off her slender, dainty finger. On the morning in question she had, she thought, placed it in the pretty pink plush case on the dresser while she went to assist her aunt in the preparations for Thanksgiving. Returning later to her room and finding the ring missing, she hastily ran into her aunt's room to inform her of her loss. No one had been in Daisy's room that morning but the housemaid, Lucetta, Aunt Patience's youngest girl, and she was above suspicion, having lived all her life on the plantation and being trusted implicitly.

On this particular morning, however, Lucetta had lingered about the dainty dresser, spending considerable time in examining the different pieces of jewelry closely. Taking a long string of pink coral beads from the dresser, she twined them about her shiny brown neck, then picked up a fancy hair ornament and stuck it in the side of her woolly pompadour. Catching sight of the ring sparkling in the plush case, Lucetta removed it and proceeded to admire it closely. A moment later she slipped it on her fat, brown finger and stepped back

to admire herself in the large oval mirror. Fearing the return of her mistress, she hastily tore the beads from her neck and the ornaments from her hair, but when she endeavored with trembling fingers to remove the ring, to her sore dismay it stuck hard and fast. Hearing approaching footsteps, the girl almost tore the flesh from her finger in a desperate effort to remove the ring before Miss Daisy could reach the room.

"Ef I jes' had some ob dat soft lye soap in de smoke-house," she gasped, "I knows I could git de ring off, an' I'se er gwine to sneak down de back stairs an' git some right dis minute."

With lightning speed Lucetta ran down the back stairs, three at a time, and proceeded to the smoke-house. Securing a handful of the slick lye soap, she ran to the broad wooden trough near the well to make some thick suds and work with all her strength to remove the ring before the swelling grew worse. It finally yielded to the strong pull she gave it with her teeth.

"Dar now," she exclaimed, "dat's what I gits fer not mindin' my mammy, what allus tole me never to tech nothin' what b'longs to de white folks. Fo' de Lawd, I'se never gwine ter put my black han's on ernudder thing what don't b'long to me, not as long as de grass grows an' water runs. Dis sho'ly will be er lesson to me as long as I lives."

Placing the ring on the edge of the trough, Lucetta turned to draw a bucket of water from the deep well in order that she might wash the dirty suds from the delicate ring that sparkled in the bright sunlight. With the bucket half way to the top, the girl stopped a moment to get her breath, for it held five gallons, and the effort was taxing her strength to the limit.

At this moment old Luke strutted up, as proud as a peacock. Holding on to the rope, Lucetta for a moment forgot her troubles, lost in admiration of the old gobbler's plumage and proud carriage.

"You sho'ly does make er handsome 'pearance, Luke," she remarked, as the gobbler strutted around the trough in plain view. A second later Luke espied the sparkling diamond and filled Lucetta with horror as he deliberately walked up, picked up the ring and pecked at it, trying to loosen the stone from the setting. Not succeeding in this, he threw up his head, backed and gulped the ring, setting and all.

For an instant Lucetta stood as though paralyzed, then, realizing what had happened and forgetting that she held to the rope, let it slip through her fingers. Down went the bucket, bursting the bottom out of it as it struck with great force the water below. Breathless and frantic with fright, the girl ran to the kitchen, where her mother was bending over a big platter of eggs being frothed for the icing of a huge cake. Throwing her arms around her mother's neck, Lucetta sobbed wildly and for a moment it seemed that her heart would break.

"What's de matter wid you, chile?" exclaimed Aunt Patience, stopping in the midst of her work. "Come now, honey, an' tell yer po' ole mammy what's happened to you. I 'lows dat some ob dem niggers frum Glasscock's Island, what's been er haulin' cotton to de gin, has dun said somethin' 'sultin' to my gal. Now, chile, you jes' up an' tell yo' ole mammy what dey said."

"No, no, no, mammy, dat ain't it," cried Lucetta, after several attempts to regain her voice.

Finally, between sobs, the girl told her mother of the incident at the well, finishing the story just as Daisy, who had been attracted by the girl's sobbing, entered. Looking up and catching sight of her sweet, tear-stained face, Lucetta ran to where she stood and threw herself upon her knees.

"Oh, Miss Daisy, I didn't mean to steal yo' ring, what I knowed was yer 'gagement ring," she cried. "I knows yer can't never forgive me for what I'se dun, but, fo' de Lawd, I'se tellin' de truth an' only wanted

to see how my han' would look wid er real diamond er shinin' on hit."

Walter, who was a witness to the confession that followed, turned pale and heartsick, for he realized that it meant death to his dear old Luke, as the ring would have to be recovered before coming in contact with the coarse gravel in the gobbler's gizzard. Choking back the big lump that gathered in his throat, he sought his aunt and requested permission to visit the house of one of the neighbors until the ordeal was over.

Old 'Lias, who had heard everything, put his hand over his pipe and grinned.

"I knowed dat ole greedy Luke would come to er bad end some day," he said, addressing his remarks to Uncle Pete, "kase he's allus er projikin erround er stickin' his ole bill whar he had no business, an' er perkin' his snout up at all de udder fowls. He jes' 'maged he was too good to eat what de rest ob de fowls was er gittin,' an' little Walter jes' spiled him er feedin' him wid scraps from de table. He, he, he!" he chuckled, backing up against the side of the "White House." "T'se er gwine right down to Uncle Amos' tool chist an' git de sharpest hatchet what I kin find, den I'll trap de ole thief wid er piece ob ginger-bread."

'Lias lost no time in putting his threat into execution, and after a lot of coaxing old Luke finally stepped up, eyed the dainty morsel and made a lunge for it. As he did so 'Lias grabbed him, being almost lifted from his feet by the gobbler's fierce struggle for freedom.

"Jes' come here an' see 'Lias er waltzin' wid ole Luke!" exclaimed Aunt Mary, addressing Aunt Patience, as she stuck her head through the kitchen window.

"You sho'ly am er good fighter, Luke, an' you mighty nigh took all de wind outen me, er tryin' to git away, so's to git in mo' debilmint, but hit's all up wid you dis time," cried 'Lias, as he tightened his grip on the



“Lias, who had heard everything, put his hand over his pipe and grinned.”

gobbler's wings. "You thought you'd have er gay time, er sashshayin' erroun wid er diamond in dat ole fat gizzard ob yourn, but dat was one time dat you dun de wrong thing. When you flunged dat diamond ring in de air an' den gulped hit down yer greedy ole throat you jes' signed yer death warrant, an' Marse Frank ain't er gwine to pardon you dis time. When I gits you in de oven in de mornin' you won't hab quite so much room for to splurge erroun like youse been er doin' every day on de lawn, when you'd see Mistah Walter comin' out to feed you."

Calling Aunt Patience to help him, 'Lias brought the sharp hatchet down with such force as to completely sever the gobbler's head at the first blow. Daisy was overjoyed when Lucetta, still showing the effects of her violent weeping, ran into her room, placed the ring in her hand and burst into a fresh fit of weeping.

"I hope yer don't think I wanted to steal yo' ring, Miss Daisy," she cried. "I jes' wanted to see how hit would look on my finger, dat was all, an' I'se never gwine to tech nothin' dat don't b'long to me no mo'. Won't you please say dat you'll forgive me, Miss Daisy?"

"Yes, I'll forgive you this time, Lucetta," answered Daisy, "but you must be careful in the future and not meddle with things that belong to others. Go to your old mother and tell her that I'm not mad at you and that hereafter you'll be a good girl. Then you may finish cleaning my room."

Placing the ring on her finger, Daisy hurried to the steamboat landing, where over 300 of the darkies were gathered to watch the Betsy Ann round the bend and witness the meeting between the lovers when Jack Duncan stepped ashore.

Daisy was happy now, since the highly prized ring had been restored, uninjured, but poor little Walter went to bed with a heavy heart that night, and it was many a day before he ceased to talk about his pet gobbler and its tragic death.

Aunt Patience and the Gypsy Fortune Teller

You, Christopher Napoleon!" shouted Aunt Patience, as I came out of my room one morning on the Briers plantation, "ef you an' dat lazy Grover Clevlan' don't stop er fightin' an' git to wuck er choppin' on dat pile of stovewood, lak I told you, I'se er gwine to gin you both to dat band of gypsies what's camped down 'long-side de big road in Marse Frank's cedar woods."

"That's right, give it to them, Aunt Patience, for they haven't done a thing but play all morning," I cried, as the two darkies hid behind the big pile of wood.

"I sho' will," she answered, "for when dem gypsies gits you two boys dey'll make you wuck day an' night, makin' you stay up all night wid dem po' bony dogs, watchin' der hosses, 'sides pullin' grass for 'em an' pickin' de cockle burrs out'n dere manes an' tails. By de time you has bin wid 'em er week you'll wish dat you had 'haved yerselves an' minded what yer po' old granny told you. You needn't stand dere, rollin' dem big white eyes of yourn at me lak er skeert mule, kase I knows dem gypsies has already got dere eyes sot on two or three of you young niggers, an' dat dey's er fixin' fer to steal you when dey gits ready to pull out, kase dey wants to make slaves out'n you, makin' you git up befo' sunrise an' 'tend to dat drove of hosses what dey carries 'round de country fer to trade wid. Dat old gypsy man what wuz up here dis mornin', er nosin' eround, has got er purty sharp eye, I'm here to tell you, an' I seed him er cuttin' hit at you an' Grover more'n once. He knows dat he could make you pull grass an' steal corn for dem hosses, an' curry an' rub 'em till dey'd be slick an' glossy, so dey could sell

or trade 'em for good bargains, lak dat man in Natchez did wid dem two match hosses what Marse Albert buyed las' spring. Caleb 'lowed de minute he sot eyes on 'em dat dey wuz slicked up fer to sell, an' dat hit would take mighty hard wuck fer to keep 'em up, an' sho' enuff, dar's bin trouble erround dis place ever sence Marse Albert bought 'em. He 'lows dat Uncle Jack don't half try to keep 'em shinin', but Uncle Jack says dat he kin see whar de brillantine what wuz put on dere shaggy old hair is er wearin' off in patches, kase all dem old hoss traders puts hit on dere stock to make 'em shine till dey kin sell 'em. Now you two niggers git to wuck right erway, an' don't let me come out here an' ketch you er playin' no mo'."

"Have you been down to the gypsy camp yet?" I asked Aunt Patience, as she returned to the kitchen.

"Yassum, I sho' has," she replied, getting me a comfortable chair and brushing it with her apron. "Me an' Sis' Calline an' Sis Polly an' er whole passel of de udder wimmen went down to dere camp Saturday night. Dat gypsy woman had bin erround to all our cabins, tellin' us dat ef we wanted our fortunes told to come to see her, an' dat de ones what didn't have enuff money to pay for dere fortunes could pay part in trade."

"What did she mean by paying part in trade?" I questioned.

"Why, honey," answered the faithful old cook, "she meant for us to pay her wid eggs an' butter, pecans or walnuts, 'simmons or chickens, or anything dat we had, but we all had to pay her some in cash. I loaned Sis' Calline half er dollar, keepin' fo' bits for myself; den we took er lot er truck an' started fer de camp. Whilst we wuz er walkin' 'long de road, laffin' an' cuttin' up, we looked back an' seed some of de men comin', too, dey er tellin' us dat dey wuz jes' followin' us fer to see de fun, but, lo an' behold, when Caleb got dere he wuz as anxious fer to have his fortune told

as I wuz, an' Brudder Jackson 'lowed dat he wuz er gwine to have his'n told, too. Dat gypsy woman dun said as how Sis' Calline wuz er gwine to marry er pow'ful han'some man 'tween now an' next fall, an' dat sho' did upset dat old man of her'n, what's bin married to her fer nigh onto forty years."

"What did she tell you?"

"What did she tell me?" repeated Aunt Patience, eyeing me suspiciously. "La, honey, you jes' oughter heard what all dat fat old greasy woman did tell me. You see, honey, hit wuz lak dis: De whole flock of us niggers went dere together, an' when we got to de do' of de tent, er gypsy man comed out'n er wagon an' axed which one wanted to have dere fortunes told fust. We all kinder hung back, one waitin' for de udder to go fust, an' to tell you de Gawd's truth, Miss Sammie, I felt erfraid to go in. I wuz dat anxious fer to hear what de woman would tell me dat I fo'ced up my courage an' 'lowed dat I wuz ready to go fust. After I got inside de tent an' stood er gazin' erround, scared half to death, er curtain at de back end of de canvas wuz slowly drawed erside an' er short, dark, fat woman stood kinder in de shadow made by de light from er candle what wuz burnin' on er box what wuz turned upside down, servin' as er table. Fo' de Lawd, honey, I thought at fust dat hit wuz er ghost; but I put dis an' dat together an' I knowed dat no ghost would be er wearin' er red shawl, wid er yaller-bordered handkerchief tied over its hade. When I got through blinkin' my eyes I jes' brung up all de courage I had wid me an' walked right in an' took er seat on er stool what de gypsy motioned for me to set on. Lookin' erround, I noticed dat she had made de end of de tent look lak er alcove, drapin' hit heavily wid Injun blankets of all colors, an' hit sho' did look spooky to me.

"I didn't know jes' how to 'dress de lady, but when she looked at me lak she wanted me to say something,

I jes' blurted out dat I wuz one of de wimmen what had promised to come an' have our fortunes told. When I axed her de price, she said dat bein' as we had promised to pay part in trade, she wouldn't charge us de reg'lar price what she charged de white folks. Den she axed how much money I could let her have, at de same time lookin' kinder sideways at my apron what I had filled wid different things I had fetched erlong. I showed her de fo' bits what I brung, but she 'lowed dat she couldn't tell much fer dat, sayin' she allus charged \$2 for er trance readin' when she got all cash. Finally she said dat as I wuz er hard-wuckin' woman, she'd go in er trance ef I had enuff in trade to finish hit out; so I took de two dozen eggs, some dried apples an' some 'simmons, an' er cake of butter an' er glass of plum jelly, tellin' her dat wuz all I brunged wid me. After she took 'em she axed me ef I couldn't git her er little piece of ham or bacon to go wid hit, so I told her ef she'd perseed wid de fortune I'd fetch de ham or bacon, whichever Miss Genie would give me, Sunday afternoon, arter I got through wid my dinner dishes. She 'lowed dat she could read de cards for 50 cents, an' read de palm for ernudder 50, but dat trances comed er little higher. I wuz 'termined to have de trance readin', kase I wanted to see how hit wuz done; so she told me to cross her palm wid silver an' she'd go on. She hung on to dat 50 cents de minute hit teched her palm; den she leaned back in de big armchair what she wuz er settin' in, an' 'gun to shiver an' tremble lak she wuz mos' froze; den her eyes 'gun to roll as she gived two or three real hard jerks, lak she wuz flingin' er fit."

"Weren't you awfully frightened?"

"Hit's de Gawd's truth, honey, I wuz skeert dat bad dat I mos' fell off'n dat stool; but I sot my knees together an' braced my feet 'ginst de legs of de seat, settin' my jaws hard enuff so she'd not hear my teeth er rattlin'. After she dun quit shakin' an' jerkin', she

sot back in dat chair as stiff an' rigid as dat iron poker; den she 'gun to talk in er deep, hollow voice what sounded lak hit wuz comin' out'n de ground.

"'I see spirits all 'round yer hade,' she said.

"'I sho' did feel squirmy, but I knowed she wuz er lyin', kase I couldn't see nothin' but er lot er flies. Whilst de cold chills wuz er prancin' up an' down my back, she gived ernudder jerk an' said dat she could see de han's of er lot er spirits stretched out all 'round my hade. I gived er quick glance over my shoulder to see ef dey wuz behind me, feelin' jes' lak I does when I'se gittin' in de bed in er dark room, erfraid dat something is er goin' to grab me by de foot. You knows how dat feelin' is, honey, kase I'se heard you say many er time dat you allus runned an' jumped in de bed arter you dun turned de light out, erfraid dat something wuz er gwine to grab you by de foot ef you didn't hurry.

"'I sees de spirit of er little chile what died er long time ergo', said de gypsy woman, 'an' dere's de spirit of yer fust husban' pintin' its finger at you.'

"'Soon as she said dat I told her dat I never had but de one husban', an' dat he wuz outside, waitin' his turn to git in; den she 'gun to jerk an' twitch ergin, sayin' dat de spirits wuz gittin' kinder mixed by havin' so many people nigh de tent. Den she axed me ef some of de ones what wuz on de outside hadn't bin married an' lost dere husban's, an' I told her 'bout Sis' Polly's husban' gittin' kilt in de gin press way back thirty years ergo. When she axed me what Sis' Polly looked lak an' how she wuz dressed, I told her dat she wuz er short, fat, yaller woman, wearin' er red an' black striped dress, an' dat she wuz er waitin' outside, too.

"'I see de spirit of yer gran'mother, hoverin' over yer lef' shoulder,' she said.

"'I looked erround an' flung my handkerchief over my lef' shoulder, but I couldn't see nothin'. When de

gypsy seed what I did, she laffed an' said dat de spirits wuz dere, but dat I couldn't see 'em wid de naked eye—dat I could see 'em ef I went in er trance lak she wuz.

“‘Er spirit tells me dat you's got er lot er jewelry in yer bosom,’ said de fortune teller, pintin' at me wid her short, fat finger.

“I sho' wuz 'sprised when she told me dat, kase sho' enuff, I did have er breastpin, er gutta percha ring an' ernudder ring made out'n red coral, what my po' mother uster wear, what she gin me on her death bed, tellin' me to allus keep hit to 'member her by. Yassum, hit sho' did beat my time how dat woman knowed I had dat snuff box hid in my bosom, wid all dat jewlry in hit, kase I hadn't told er soul 'bout hits bein' dere.

“‘Dere dey is—hoverin' all 'round yer hade!’ she said, raisin' her arm an' makin' motions wid hit. I 'gun to git weak in de knees an' de sweat jes' broke out all over me, makin' me feel lak I wanted to git out'n dat tent, into de fresh air. She must er seed dat I wuz frightened, kase she roused up an' took my han' in her'n, puttin' er little smooth glass over de palm; den she 'gun to read my whole life, from de cradle to de grave. She told me er lot er things what wuz true, even tellin' me 'bout de time when I stole er apron full of brown sugar from old missus when I wuz er little gal; den she told me 'bout losin' de twins an' de little boy what we named 'Lias, what et er hat full of green mountain plums an' took congestion an' died befo' we could git de doctor from 'cross de river. She told me 'bout so many things what's happened, an' all of 'em true, too, dat I laid erwake all night long, thinkin' 'bout 'em an' wonderin' how dat gypsy knowed all dat. I'se er gwine back an' have her tell my fortune over, kase I wants to ax her 'bout some things what I furgot erbout when I wuz dere Saturday night.”

"You'll simply be throwing your money away," I remarked, 'for that woman doesn't know half as much about your life as I do."

"Mebbe dat's so," answered Aunt Patience, putting some fresh logs on the fire, "but she sho' does know er whole lot what is true. She told me 'zactly how old I is; how old I wuz when I got married; how many chillun I'se had an' how many of 'em is er livin' now, sayin' dat I'se had er lot er trouble in my time, but dat my las' days would be de happiest, an' den she said dat I would have to be mighty careful, kase I wuz er gwine to cross water purty soon. Now dat's 'zactly what me an' Caleb has bin er plannin' to do, kase we'se bin 'tendin' to take er trip on de Betsy to Vidalia, on de udder side of de river from Natchez, fer to visit my daughter Rose, what's er livin' there. When I got up to go out my whole body wuz feelin' kinder stiff, lak yer foot do when hit falls ersleep, an' de gypsy 'splained dat by sayin' dat my heart wuz beatin' fast an' dat my blood wuz thin.

"Sis' Calline wuz de next one to go in de tent, but bless you, honey, she wuzn't in dere no time till she comed er runnin' out lak de old Nick wuz arter her. She paid de woman for er trance readin', too, but de minute dat she told Sis' Calline dat de spirits wuz all 'round her, reachin' out fer to shake 'han's wid her, she got skeert an' runned outside. We all tried to make her go back an' let de gypsy finish, 'specially long as she dun paid her for goin' in er trance, 'sides givin' her er lot er butterbeans an' red pepper, an' eggs an' er lot er dried sage, but Sis' Calline 'lowed dat she wuz welcome to all she got, kase she didn't want no old witch er callin' de spirits 'round her hade less'n she could reach out an' tech 'em wid her own han's.

"When hit comed Sis' Polly's turn to go in, she wuz dat skeert she could hardly walk, an' when de gypsy pulled de curtains to one side, she 'gun to tremble so dat she could hardly hold dat young domineck



"When hit comed Sis' Polly's turn to go in."

rooster what she fetched to he'p pay for havin' her fortune told. De woman took de rooster, puttin' hit under de box what she had de candle er settin' on, den she took de money an' de canned cherries. When she went in de trance, rollin' her eyes up at de top of de tent an' 'gun to gurgle lak she wuz er stranglin', de sweat broke out on Sis' Polly jes' lak it did on me.

"'Yer name is Aunt Polly,' said de gypsy, an' Atunt Polly nodded her hade, kase her tongue wuz glued to de roof of her mouth an' she couldn't move hit.

"'You's bin married befo',' said de gypsy woman, 'an' yer fust husban' wuz kilt in er accident in er gin press. I see his spirit now, hoverin' over yer hade, an' he's mad at you, kase you married ergin after promisin' him dat you wouldn't.'

"De minute dat gypsy told Aunt Polly 'bout her husban' being mad at her, 'count er gittin' married ergin, she fell out'n de chair, upsettin' de box what had de candle on hit, lettin' de domineck rooster er-loose an' makin' de tent dark as pitch, an' we poured more'n one bucket full er water on her hade befo' we could fetch her 'round. When she comed to, she 'lowed dat de gypsy woman wuz in league wid de debbil, an' said dat she wouldn't have nothin' mo' to do wid her, kase er witch an' er black cat wuz two things dat she didn't had no use for.

"By dis time de udder wimmin wuz too skeert to have dere fortunes told in er trance, so de gypsy took what dey brunged an' jes read dere palms an' told dere fortunes wid de cards, tellin' 'em how dey could git rich; how dey could find er lot er gold ef dey looked in de right place fer hit; how dey could git even wid people what hadn't treated 'em right, an' how dey could tell ef er pusson loved 'em.

"When hit comed Caleb's turn to go in, he wanted to see her go in er trance, but he didn't know how to manage hit when she told him dat she didn't go in er trance fer less'n two dollars. I cautioned Caleb

not to give her dat dollar what Marse Albert gived him fer drivin' him to Natchez one dark night, but he finally 'greed to give her de dollar an' de rest in corn, he 'greein' to go back to de house an' fetch de corn after supper. When she got well in de trance an' 'gun to jerk an' twitch an' gurgle lak she wuz tryin' to swallow something what wouldn't go down her throat, she told Caleb dat de spirit of his brudder Ike wuz wantin' to talk wid him, but couldn't. Caleb 'lows dat he did feel his brudder Ike tech him on de back of de neck wid his cold, clammy han's; den de gypsy told him dat he wuz er gwine to have er mighty narrow 'scape from drownin', but dat de spirit of his brudder would stan' by an' save him.

"'Dere's er spirit over yer hade now, wid some kind of er message,' said de woman, rollin' her eyes an' 'tendin' lak she wuz tryin' to read de message. She said dat de writin' wuz kinder faint an' she couldn't hardly make out what hit wuz, but dat hit said something 'bout Caleb bein' married twice befo' he died. She said dat de spirit wanted to 'vise him to go mighty slow, sayin' dat de second marriage wuz to be er miserable one for him, an' dat his second wife would make hit so hot fer him dat he'd be glad to die to git shet of her.

"'Now ax me any question you like an' I'll answer hit while I'm in de trance,' she said to Caleb.

"Caleb wuz dat rattled dat he couldn't think what to ax her, so he cleared his throat an' says: 'What side of de river is Natchez on?'

"Now, Miss Sammie, you knows dat fool nigger's bin goin' up to Natchez all his life, an' he knows as well as anybody dat hit's on de right han' side goin' up, but he wuz dat skeert dat he don't 'member now which side she told him hit wuz on. De idea of Caleb spendin' dat dollar an' all dat corn, fer to ask dat woman er fool question lak dat, an' me needin' er new pair of shoes so bad! Hit sho' do beat my time,

but I 'low he'll know which side his bread is buttered on when he gits dat second wife."

"Do you really think he would want to marry again, as old as he is, if you were to die?" I asked.

"Why, Lawd, yes, Miss Sammie," she answered, laughing heartily. 'De older er nigger is when his wife dies, de bigger fool he is, an' I 'lows dat my tracks wouldn't be washed erway from erround dat cabin befo' Caleb would be er sittin' up to some right young gal what's young enuff to be his gran'daughter, an' I wouldn't be 'sprised ef he wuzn't wearin' er red necktie an' goin' to dances in less'n er week after I wuz buried, 'stead er goin' to chuch an' to prayer meetin'. Yassum, dat's so, an' ef I wuz to die to-night an' he'd be free to marry ergin, I 'lows dere wouldn't be er bigger fool nigger on dis plantashun den he'd be, even ef he had to sell our old milk cow to git money to buy him er new suit er clothes an' er stovepipe hat an' low-cut shoes. I'se told Caleb more'n once dat he'd have er hard time findin' er wife what would wuck for him lak I has, but he's lak all de rest of de niggers—plumb foolish 'bout de young gals."

At this juncture Aunt Patience was interrupted by one of the women on the plantation entering the kitchen.

"Aunt Patience," she cried, "I wish you'd come out here an' whip dat Christopher Napoleon, kase he's got er nigger-shooter an' he shot my John Henry in de eye wid er chanyberry. I don't lak to strike him, kase he's your gran'son, but ef he don't 'have hissef an' let my boy erlone, dere sho' will be trouble."

"Never mind, Sis' Jenkins, I'll tend to dat black rascal," answered Aunt Patience, going out into the yard, where her young hopeful was perched on top of the woodpile.

"You Christopher Napoleon!" she shouted, shaking her fist at the little darkey, "ef you don't throw dat popgun erway an' stop shootin' dem chillun's eyes out,

I'se er gwine to skin you erlive, boy. You's already got mos' of de chillun on dis plantashun goin' 'round wid one eye shet, an' ef I ketches you shootin' at 'em ergin, I'll break er limb off'n er tree an' beat you to death. Fo' Gawd, Miss Sammie, dat boy's enuff to drive anybody crazy, kase he ain't more'n outer one mess of debbilment till he's in ernudder."



"Fo' Gawd, Miss Sammie, dat boy's enuff to drive anybody crazy."

A Rabbit Hunt on Briers Plantation

Good morning, everybody, a Happy New Year to all!" I shouted as I entered the kitchen on the Briers plantation on a bright, crisp New Year's morning.

"Same to you, honey, same to you!" replied half a dozen of the servants, engaged in their morning duties.

"Why, honey, you's lookin' as bright an' happy as dat red bird what's bin er singin' all mornin' in de big post oak back of de kitchen," remarked Aunt Patience, who was mixing a bowl of dressing which she intended to use in stuffing the New Year's turkey.

"Yes, I do feel happy, but I'm tired and very sleepy," I answered, taking a seat in the rocker which Lucetta placed in front of the open fireplace. "Tell me what happened last night, for I was so frightened I could not sleep. First, I was awakened soon after retiring, by the slamming of the big gate and the tramping of feet on the veranda; then by the sound of strange voices in the room adjoining mine, and about 4 o'clock this morning I was again aroused by the dogs barking as though they were tearing some poor soul to pieces. What was the matter—someone trying to steal the chickens?"

"La, honey, wuz you dat frightened?" asked Aunt Patience, bursting into a fit of laughter, in which the others joined. "I 'lowed Marse Frank dun told ev'rybody 'bout dat big rabbit hunt what he an' Marse Albert an' Marse Rob has bin er plannin' for New Year's. Yassum, dey's bin er plottin' for more'n er month fer to have er rabibt hunt—de biggest hunt, honey, what's ever bin helt on Briers, an' ef dey don't fetch home er wagon-load of rabbits, hit'll be kase dere powder gives out. Marse Rob's bin er tellin' Marse Frank how ~~he~~ uster make de fur fly from de

Molly cottontails when he wuz er boy, so dey 'ranged fer to have Mister Will Dicks an' Mister Pardee an' Cap'n Rumble come down from Natchez an' spend er week here, huntin' rabbits, kase dey sho' do need thin-nin' out. All of 'em uster go rabbit huntin' when dey wuz boys together, so Marse Frank 'lowed dat hit would seem lak old times to git up ernudder hunt an' see which one could bring down de mos' game. De folks from Natchez wuz due on de Betsy yistiddy, but she runned on er san'bar 'rectly after leavin' dere an' she didn't git here till after 10 o'clock las' night. Ef you had er bin out here in de kitchen dis mornin' 'bout 4 o'clock, you sho' would er seed er sight, kase all de dogs on de plantashun comed er-runnin' when dey heard Caleb's old horn blowin' toot, toot, t-o-o-t, an' dey wuz so mixed up dat yer couldn't tell one from 'tother."

"That is indeed strange—I wonder why nothing was said about the hunt in my presence," I remarked astonished at what Aunt Patience had said.

"I knows de reason dey didn't tell you—Marse Frank wuz erfraid dat you'd want to go wid 'em, an' you sho' would er caught yer death er cold, chile, gittin' up dat early," explained Aunt Patience, as her busy hands kept time with her tongue. "When I went out in de yard, fer to put de baskets filled wid lunch in de wagon, dere wuz houn's an' setters an' fox-terriers an' p'inters, an' all kinds er dogs, an' I couldn't hardly walk widout steppin' on 'em. 'Lias an' Uncle Jack had charge of de wagon what wuz to follow an' fetch in de game what dey kilt, an' Caleb an' Brudder Jackson had charge of de dogs, an' I tell you, honey, hit sho' wuz er sight to see all dem dogs er yelpin' an' howlin' an' barkin' fit to kill dereselves, kase dey wuz all excited an' anxious fer to git started on de chase, an' ef you had er bin on de back po'ch, you could er heard Caleb's old dog Music wid his wow-oo, wow-oo, wow-o-o, after dey wuz er mile erway from de house."

"Well, I am real sorry I did not know about it, so

that I could have seen them start," I said, "but I will catch them when they return and have them tell me all about it."

"I wants to be here when dey comes in, too," continued Aunt Patience, "an' see how many rabbits dey has, kase dey's bin powerful thick of late, an' I knows dey'll git er lot of 'em. I heard Brudder Jackson tellin' Marse Albert yistiddy dat dey wuz er tearin' through de cotton fields an' eatin' up all de cabbage leaves what we'se bin er throwin' out to de chickens, an' he said dat sometimes dey'd huddle up under er bunch er grass an' wouldn't move till he mos' stepped on 'em."

When the sun was sending its last bright rays across the muddy waters of the Mississippi river, before sinking out of sight behind the huge live oaks and cypress that formed its western border, I heard the horns of the hunters from the rear of the plantation, as the wagon took a road that wound through the cotton fields that were now stripped of their snowy fleece. Entering the kitchen a few minutes later, I encountered 'Lias bearing a huge armful of slaughtered rabbits.

"Where in the world did you get all those rabbits? Did you trap them?" I asked, as the faithful old darkey deposited at least three dozen on the kitchen table.

"Why, Miss Sammie, dis ain't de ha'f of what we'se got in de wagon," he answered, wiping his forehead with a red bandana. "Dat wagon wuz mos' full when we got through huntin', but we'se bin er leavin' 'em at de quarters as we comed by 'em, givin' 'em erway to ev'rybody. I'se er gwine to sell de ones what Marse Frank gives me to de steward on de Betsy when she comes up here ter-morrow."

"How much will he pay you for them?" I inquired.

"Well," answered 'Lias, "ef I cleans an' dresses 'em nice, dey'll 'low me er dollar an' er half er dozen fer 'em, an' I 'lows fer to sell at least fo' dozen."

"Fo' dozen?" exclaimed Aunt Patience and Aunt Tilda in one breath, "You lyin' nigger, you knows dat

you won't have no fo' dozen fer your share of dem rabbits. You'd better stick to de truth, nigger, kase lak as not Miss Sammie'll put what you tells her 'bout de hunt in de Natchez paper, an' Mister Will Dicks an' Cap'n Rumble sho' will ketch you in er lie."

"Ef you alls will keep yer mouths shet an' lemme erlone, I'll tell Miss Sammie de Gawd's truth 'bout this hunt," answered 'Lias, bringing in another armful of rabbits, five or six quail and three wild turkeys. "Ef she wants to put what I tells her in de paper, dat'll be all right, kase I wuz right dere wid de white folks all day, an' dey kin see dat I don't tell no lies. Marse Frank don't need to be ershamed of dis day's hunt, I'm here to tell you, kase dey dun mighty good shootin' an' dey's all tickled over de success' what dey had—wuss'n er lot of schoolboys huntin' on er Saturday."

"From the looks of things, you had a very successful hunt."

"Yessum, indeed we did," answered 'Lias, helping himself to a couple of cookies lying on the end of the table. "I'se bin on many er hunt in my days, but dis sho' wuz de fastest one what ever happened on dis ole plantashun. Marse Rob an' Mister Will Dicks both had new guns an' wuz er tryin' to see which one could kill de mos' rabbits, an' I'se tellin' you de Gawd's truth, Miss Sammie, when I tells you dat I got de agie when I seed Marse Rob lif' dat gun of his'n an' kill two rabbits at one shoot, as dey crossed each other."

"Now, jes' listen to dat lyin' nigger!" exclaimed Aunt Patience, coming over to the window near where I was sitting.

"Hit's de Gawd's truth, Aunt Patience," protested 'Lias, vehemently, "an' ef Miss Sammie doubts my word, all she has to do is to ask Marse Rob when he comes in to supper. She can't help but b'lieve hit when she hears hit from his own mouth, kase Miss Sammie knows dat Marse Rob wouldn't tell no lie fer nobody. When we reached de edge of de swamp 'bout

daylight, I knowed dat we'd have good luck, kase hit looked lak ev'ry kind er game you ever heard erbout had bin on dress p'rade, judgin' from de tracks what dey lef' in de soft mud. We hadn't more'n struck de edge of dat six-acre brier patch what we wuz headed fur, den de dogs had de rabbits er runnin' lak lightnin', an' dere wuz times when we couldn't tell whether we wuz er shootin' at de dogs or de rabbits. Right in de midst of de shootin', up flew er covey of quail, an——"

"Go slow now, 'Lias, go slow," admonished Aunt Patience, "kase Miss Sammie's liable to put all dat in de paper."

"Yassum, up flew er covey of quail," continued 'Lias, "an' befo' I could raise my gun to my shoulder, Marse Rob dun fired both barrels at 'em, drappin' five an' breakin' de wing of ernudder one what de dogs runned down. Marse Frank an' Mister Will Dicks could er shot lots of dem quail, kase dey flew right over dere hades, but dey said dey wuz after rabbits an' dey wuzn't er gwine to waste dere ammunition on nothin' else, but dey sho' did furgit erbout de rabbits when de dogs scared up er flock of wild turkeys in de edge of de timber close by de river bank. Mos' ev'rybody fired four or five shots erpiece at 'em, but wid all dat shootin' dey only brung down two—one wid er broken wing an' one what Uncle Jack cut de hade off whilst I helt hit. After dey dun got outer range of our shot-guns, Marse Rob grabbed his rifle an' took ernudder shot at 'em, drappin' er big, fat gobbler what had er beard more'n ten inches long, makin' three what we got altogether.

"Soon as dem turkeys wuz out er sight, de dogs runned six or seven rabbits in er brush pile, an' as fas' as one would come out, crack would go er gun an' over went Mister Rabbit, not one out of de lot gittin' erway. After we dun got all dere wuz in de brush pile, Marse Albert took out dat quart bottle of whisky what he allus carries when he goes huntin', an' after

all de white folks had er drink, he giv what was lef' to me an' Uncle Jack. When Uncle Jack wuz raisin' de bottle, to take what wuz left', his old dog Lemon made er dash fer de brush an' grabbed er cottontail what wuz hidin' dere. Befo' de dog could harm de rabbit, Uncle Jack snatched hit out'n Lemon's mouth, an' says to me: 'Look, 'Lias; I'se er gwine to give dis here whisky to de rabbit an' see what hit'll do. Bein' as hit's squirrel whisky, maybe hit'll clam er tree.' I told him I'd hold de rabbit whilst he poured de whisky down hits throat, an' you sho' would er laffed ef you had er seed how dat rabbit pricked up his ears an' sniffed—den he 'gun to scratch wid his claws an' tried to break erloose. When Marse Albert an' Mister Will Dicks comed over to whar we wuz, an' dey seed Uncle Jack er-wrasslin' wid dat drunken cottontail, dey all laffed, an' Marse Albert said: 'Turn him erloose, Jack, an' les' see what he'll do.' De minute Uncle Jack sot dat rabbit on de ground, thinkin' hit would head fer er tree an' clam hit, dat cottontail jes' sat up on his hin' legs, walked over to Brudder Jackson's dog, an' spit right square in his face."

"Look here, 'Lias," exclaimed Aunt Patience, "ain't I dun begged you to tell Miss Sammie nothin' but de truth 'bout dat hunt? Ain't you ershamed of yersef, standin' dere an' not knowin' what minute de Lawd's er gwine to parelize you fer lyin' lak dat? You better be careful, nigger, kase you knows well ernuff dat dat rabbit never spit in dat dog's face."

"Well," replied 'Lias, "ef you alls don't b'lieve what I say, all you'se got to do is to ask Marse Rob, or Marse Frank, or Marse Albert, kase dey wuz all er-standin' dere an' dey seed him do hit."

"I knows what's de matter wid dat nigger—he's got some of dat squirrel whisky under his skin, an' de truth ain't in him," cried Aunt Tilda, reaching for 'Lias' ear and giving it a good twist. "De idea of you er-standin' dere, tellin' Miss Sammie dat de rabbit spit

in de dog's face, an' dat Marse Rob killed two wid one shot! You'd better go home an' go to bed, kase dat liquor sho' has gone to your hade."

"I wouldn't er b'lieved hit myself ef I hadn't er seen hit wid my own eyes," explained 'Lias, "but any of de white folks will tell you dat hit's so. When I wuz er-comin' 'cross de patch an' I runned into er bunch of seven rabbits, I got de agie an'——"

"What do you mean by the agie?" I asked.

"Dat's when you gits so frightened dat yer can't pull de trigger of de gun," explained 'Lias, taking a big bite of gingerbread that Lucetta had given him. "When I wuz er-crossin' de patch, wonderin' which one of de white folks wuz er gwine to kill de mos' rabbits, I runned square onto er lot of cottontails, bunched up lak er passel er pigs at de feedin' trough. I raised my gun an' wuz er gwine to fire into de bunch, but my han' trembled so dat I couldn't press de trigger no more'n I could fly widout wings. Dere wuz seven of 'em, an'——"

"Lawd, Miss Sammie, don't yer b'lieve er word dat nigger tells you," cried Aunt Patience, putting several large chunks of wood in the stove, "kase he's bin er-drinkin' so much of dat squirrel whisky dat hit's plumb turned his hade. De las' time he wuz on er hunt wid Marse Albert he comed back an' went in de stable an' laid dere, in one of de stalls, for two days befo' we knowed whar he wuz at, an' de fust thing you know, he'll be er-tryin' to make you b'lieve dat de rabbits wuz er-flyin' through de air lak de birds do!"

"Yassum, dere wuz seven of 'em, all in one bunch," continued 'Lias, "an' when I got so dat I could pull de trigger—dat gun kicked so hard dat hit knocked me clear off my feet! I reckon dat Marse Rob mus' er had er han' in loadin' dat gun, kase hit never kicked lak dat befo' an' my shoulder is dat so' now dat I can't hardly tech hit. Yassum, de white folks has de agie jes' lak de niggers do, kase Marse Rob wuz er-

tellin' Mister Will Dicks dis mornin' 'bout de time when he shot his fust deer, sayin' dat he wuz er-tremblin' so dat he comed mighty nigh shakin' de load out'n de gun. I 'member de time he 'fers to, kase I wuz wid him on dat hunt, 'rectly after de war wuz over, when deer wuz more plentiful 'round here den dey has bin since, kase de niggers an' de po' white trash wuz hard up an' didn't have no money fer to buy powder wid.

"Marse Rob had jes' comed back from servin' in Fenner's battery, an' de deer wuz so thick on de plantashun dat dey uster git in de cornfields an' mow de corn down, an' sometimes dey uster come right up to de stable an' eat de hay out'n de cribs. Marse Rob had his ole Harper's Ferry rifle, loaded wid er big charge of powder an' buckshot, so we went down in er field an' sot in one corner fer to watch for 'em, an' thin 'em out. Purty soon he heard something walkin' on de dry leaves, an' when he looked up he seed seven or eight big bucks comin' right towards us, pawin' de ground an' playin' lak young kittens. Two or three of 'em had horns on 'em dat looked lak Miss Genie's big rockin' chair when hits turned upside down, an' when we seed 'em er-comin' towards whar we wuz hidin', Marse Rob's heart jumped up in his throat, mos' chokin' him; den his teeth 'gun to rattle so dat he had to double his tongue up in de back of his mouth, to keep from bitin' hit clean off. When one——. Look here, Christopher Napoleon, ef you don't stop er-mockin' me, I'll take you out in de yard an' wear you out, boy!

"When one old buck walked up to Marse Rob, actin' lak he wuz er gwine to bite him, he lowered de gun an' blazed erway, puttin' fo' pounds of shot in dat buck's shoulder an' drappin' him in his tracks. Marse Rob wuz er-shakin' so dat he couldn't hardly cut de deer's throat, an' I couldn't he'p him any, kase I never could look er deer in de face an' stab him."

"About how many rabbits do you think they got to-day?" I asked.

"De Lawd only knows, Miss Sammie," answered 'Lias, "kase we wuz er shootin' 'em an' loadin' 'em in de wagon till hit wuz mos' ha'f full. Fo' of dem Sandy Creek niggers went er huntin' erbout er week befo' Christmus an' one of 'em told me dat dey shot ninety-three rabbits in one day, but dat wuzn't er patch to what we kilt. Me an' Uncle Jack killed more'n thirty dat I knows of, 'sides two quail an' er wild turkey what I shot on de wing. Dat turkey comed purty nigh gittin' me in trouble, kase he hadn't more'n hit de groun' befo' er white man, what lives up de bayou, comed er runnin' up an' said dat wuz his turkey—dat he shot him wid er rifle an' dat he wuz er fallin' when I blazed loose at hit, but I knowed dat my gun wuz de one what brung him down, an' Marse Rob 'vised me not to give de turkey up less'n de man could prove dat he shot him wid er rifle. Dat man wuz mad kase I wouldn't let him walk off wid my turkey, but Marse Rob an' Marse Albert backed me up, an' dey both proved by de buckshot what wuz in hit dat I wuz de one dat owned de turkey. De man 'lowed dat he'd make hit hot for me ef he ever ketched me huntin' or fishin' 'round his place, but

He'll have to be mighty swift on his pegs
Ef he beats dis nigger er-movin' his legs."

Tossing his brimless old hat as high as the ceiling and laughing loudly as he caught it, 'Lias ran down the back steps and disappeared in the darkness of the night, singing:

"Oh, Molly Hare, what yer doin' there,
Running through de cotton patch,
Hard as you kin tare."

Aunt Patience and the Ku Klux Klan

The soft, dreamy atmosphere of a long summer twilight wrapped the famous old Briers plantation in peaceful serenity; a breeze, cool and sweet, swept through the old-fashioned kitchen with its white sanded floor, where Aunt Patience and Lucetta were busily engaged in washing and putting away the dishes from the evening meal. As the hoot of an owl was heard and the twilight fast deepened into darkness, strange voices arose in the woods as insect creatures crept out of their shadowy resting places and tuned up for the great orchestra of the night.

"Come right in dis house an' stop makin' dat dog bark so! Don't you know dat de Klu Klux'll git you ef yer goes out'n de house after hit gits dark? One of dem Klu Klux ketched er nigger boy over on Glasscock's island las' week, an' dat boy ain't never bin heard of sence. I'se dun warned you, chile, so ef dey gits dere clammy han's on you, yer ain't got nobody to blame but yerself."

So spoke Aunt Patience, one of the faithful old cooks on the plantation, her remarks being addressed to a pickaninny who stood just outside the kitchen door, playing with one of the numerous dogs to be found at all times on the premises. As soon as Aunt Patience mentioned the Ku Klux, the darky immediately hurried inside and crept upon the logs of wood piled in one corner of the kitchen. His actions clearly indicated that he was thoroughly frightened.

"Lawd, honey, how you scairt me!" exclaimed Aunt Patience, as I entered the kitchen unexpectedly upon hearing her talk about the Ku Klux. "You sho' do look lak er ghost in dat white dress, an' when I turned 'round I thought you wuz one of dem Klu Klux."

"What do you know about the Ku Klux? Don't you know that the organization has long since disbanded?" I asked.

"Of course I knows hit, Miss Sammie, but I jes' tells de chillun dat de Klu Klux'll git 'em, fer to skeer 'em into behavin' an' keepin' out'n de long grass after hit gits dark, kase de grass am full of de pizenest snakes dat creeps in dis part of the country. No longer'n las' week Sis' Calline's youngest boy wuz bit by a big rattler what wuz curled up outside de cabin in de chimley corner, an' dat wuz er snake fer you, I'm here to tell you. Yassum, dat snake had twelve rattles an' er button, an' wuz longer den any hoe handle on dis plantashun. Dat's his skin what Marse Albert's got outside, hangin' up 'longside de smokehouse, an' de cold chills runs up an' down by back ev'ry time I pass where he is, no matter ef he is dade."

"But I was talking about the Ku Klux, not about snakes," I interrupted.

"Yassum, I knows dere ain't no Klu Klux 'round here now, lak dere wuz 'rectly after de war wuz over, an' I'se powerful glad dere ain't, but lemme tell you, honey, dat I 'members de time when dis here whole country wuz full of 'em. When old missus took all her chillun an' me an' yer old black mammy an' went up to Huntsville, Alabama, fer to stay till she got strong an' well after she dun 'covered from er long spell of typhoid fever, we runned 'cross more Klu Klux up dere den dey ever wuz here."

"Who were the Ku Klux and what did they look like?" I questioned, by way of leading Aunt Patience out.

"Well, I tell yer, honey, some said dat dey wuz de ghosts of our old marsters what fell on de battlefield durin' de war, but I ain't never found out to dis day who dey wuz. Dey warn't no livin' bein's, I knows dat, kase I'se dun bin close to 'em an' no human pusson could ever drink fifteen gallons of water at one time

an' den 'low dat he wuz thirsty, an' dat's what one of 'em dun one night when er passel of 'em was passin' long here, crossin' de plantashun. Ef I lives to be er hundred years old, I'll never furgit dat night."

"They weren't after you, were they?"

"No, indeed, honey; dey wuz crossin' de plantashun, headin' fer Glasscock's Island, an' dey stopped at our cabin fer to git some water to drink. Me an' Caleb had jes' laid down an' wuz 'bout half asleep when we hears de dogs er barkin' outside. Caleb 'lowed dat some of de po' white trash what lived 'round here in dem days wuz after his speckled domineck rooster what he bought from er man on a flatboat, so he gits down his gun an' goes to de front door. When he stepped outside, what yer think he seed?"

"Somebody running off with his rooster?"

"No, indeed, honey, but er whole passel of dem Klu Klux on dere hosses! Dey didn't make no noise lak er hoss do when he's travelin' 'long de road at night, kase dey had gunnysacks fastened to de hoofs of de hosses, an' dey rid right up to de cabin lak dey wuz walkin' on hay. I wuz behind Caleb wid er candle in my han', an' when I seed dat dey wuz de Klu Klux, I snatched dat gun out'n his han' an' flunged hit in one corner of de cabin."

"How many were there in the party?"

"Lawd, honey, I couldn't tell yer, but hit looked lak dere wuz er hundred of 'em, an' maybe more, an' dey had de cabin s'rounded on all fo' sides. De leader got down off'n his hoss an' walked up to de door, makin' er sign dat he wuz thirsty an' wanted er drink er water. Caleb had drawed er fresh bucket of water from de well befo' he went to bed, an' I'm here to tell you dat he didn't lose no time findin' dat bucket. When he held out de gourd to de man, thinkin' he would drink some an' pass de bucket to de men on de hosses, dat man turned de bucket up an' drained hit in no time, motionin' fer Caleb to git him some more. I knows

yer can't hardly believe me, but I'm tellin' yer de Gawd's truth, Miss Sammie, when I tells yer dat dat man emptied three buckets of water, one after de udder, an'——"

"Hold on, Aunt Patience; surely not three buckets. You mean three dippers, do you not?"

"Lawd, honey, dat man emptied dem three buckets lak dey wuz so many thimbles, an' den he spoke de onliest words dat I ever heard one of 'em say. After he dun drained de las' drop out'n de third bucket, he handed hit back to Caleb, sayin': 'Dat's de fust water I'se tasted sence I wuz shot on de battlefield at Manassas—fetch me some more.'

"De wind what wuz er comin' in through de door 'most blowed me over when I seed dat man drink all dat water wid my own eyes, an' I tells you dat me an' Caleb drawed er awful long breath when we seed him git on his hoss an' motion fer de udders to follow him. Neither me nor Caleb closed our eyes dat night, kase we didn't know what minute dem ghosts might all come back an' want more water, so we jes' knealt down an' prayed an' prayed till de roosters 'gun to crow fer daylight.

"When I comed up to de house here, fer to start de fires an' cook breakfast, I didn't say nothin' to nobody 'bout what happened, kase I 'lowed de folks would say somethin' 'bout 'em at de table, ef dey had er seen 'em. When breakfast wuz over an' nobody said er word 'bout de Klu Klux bein' out, I called Marse Albert in de kitchen an' asked him ef he heard anybody passin' de house durin' de night. He said dat 'long 'bout midnight he heard de dogs makin' er racket in de front yard, but he thought dey wuz er barkin' at de moon, so he turned over an' went to sleep ergin. When he saw dat I wuz all in er tremble an' my teeth er chatterin', he ask me what wuz de matter, so I up an' told him 'bout de Klu Klux comin' to our cabin. When I spoke erbout de ghost what drunk all dat water an'

den wanted more, he laffed an' said: 'You needn't be 'fraid of de Klu Klux as long as you lives on Briers plantashun; dey won't meddle wid you ef you clucks lak er hen an' gives 'em plenty of water.'

"Dat was de fust time dat I ever seed de Klu Klux, but when me an' Aunt Mary wuz up at Huntsville wid yer mother, soon after de war wuz over, dere wuz er lot of 'em 'round dat place. I 'members one Saturday night, whilst we wuz at de hotel, dat er lot of 'em come into de town, ridin' on big black hosses what had dere feet tied up in gunny sacks an' white sheets over de saddles, wid holes cut in de sheets fer de hosses eyes. All of 'em had on big, black robes what almost touched de ground, an' some of de ghosts had two heads. Ev'ry one of 'em had er gun an' er 'volver, an' some of 'em had nothin' but skulls fer heads, wid big fiery eyes er shinin' out'n de holes where de real eyes oughter bin. De fust we saw of 'em was when somebody blowed er whistle an' dey come er ridin' down de street widout er word bein' said by nobody, haltin' in front of de hotel where we wuz er stoppin'.

"De minute de Klu Klux entered de town, de niggers lit out fer de camps where de Yankee soldiers wuz, shoutin' an' er prayin' an' er beggin' de soldiers fer to save 'em. I reckon dat me an' Aunt Mary wuz de onliest black wimmen in dat town when de Klu Klux halted, but we wuzn't 'fraid of 'em, kase yer mother stood by us an' said dat dey wouldn't do us no harm as long as we wuz wid her.

"When de leader blew er whistle an' held up his han' fer 'em to stop, dere wuz er lot er Yankee soldiers marchin' up an' down de street, wid dere guns loaded, but dey didn't fire no shots at de Klu Klux, kase dey knowed better'n to do dat. After dey dun halted an' de leaders wuz in er group, talkin' low to demselves, here comes er whole regiment of Yankee troops from de camps on de double quick. When dey got nigh de hotel an' dey seed dat de Klu Klux wasn't harmin' no-

body, but jes' sittin' dere on dere black hosses, makin' signs to each other lak de deaf an' dumb folks do, de general rode up in front of his troops an' faced dat band of Klu Klux. De soldiers even brunged in some cannons an' had 'em all ready to shoot, but de Klu Klux didn't run when dey seed 'em—dey jes' sat dere on dere hosses lak dey wuz er itchin' fer somebody to start er fight. Purty soon de cap'n of de Klu Klux brought his 'volver up 'longside his head, an' every one of his men made de same sign, lak dey wuz answerin' de salute. De Yankee gen'ral looked at 'em erwhile, den he puts up his sword an' told de soldiers to go on back to dere camps, kase de Klu Klux wuzn't creatin' no fuss an' he 'lowed dat he had no right fer to fire on 'em.

"De Klu Klux stayed right dere till de soldiers wuz out o' sight; den de leader blowed er whistle, which wuz answered by er thousan' more, den dey rode off towards de woods where dey comed from. Me an' Aunt Mary an' yer mother watched 'em whilst dey wuz in front of de hotel, but we didn't follow to see where dey went, no indeed.

"Caleb thinks to dis day dat de one what drunk all dat water at our cabin dat night wuz de spirit of old Marsa Gordon, kase when he wuz er livin' he wuz dat mean an' stingy wid his money dat he wouldn't hardly drink no water. Ev'rybody 'lowed dat he wuz de stingiest man in Mississippi, an once, when he went up to Natchez, fer to git er pair er glasses, de man what 'zamed his eyes found dat one of 'em wuz purty nigh out. He told Marsa Gordon so, an' said he'd fix him er nice pair of readin' glasses for two dollars. Do you think dat man bought 'em? Indeed he didn't, honey, he jes' told dat eye doctor dat he would wear de old glasses what he had on an' let de bad eye go out; den when he couldn't see out'n hit no more he'd only have to buy er glass fer one eye. He wuz de stingiest man I ever laid my eyes on, an' he never would er drunk no three buckets of water ef he had to pay fer 'em."

At this juncture the little pickaninny, who had fallen asleep on the pile of wood, tumbled to the floor, yelling and clutching wildly at Aunt Patience's dress.

"What's de matter wid you, chile? Can't you roost on dat pile er wood widout fallin' off an' scarin' folks lak dat?" exclaimed Aunt Mary, giving the darkey a yank by the collar.

"I reckon I wuz dreamin', kase I thought de Klu Klux had me by de hair an' wuz er draggin' me through er cotton field," answered Christopher Napoleon, causing Lucetta and several of the other darkies to laugh heartily.

"All you niggers git yer things on an' come wid me," said Aunt Mary, lighting a tin lantern and making ready to go to her cabin. "Make haste now, kase I'se gwine to git you chillun home befo' de dew falls, fer de doctor wuz tellin' Miss Genie day befo' yis-tiddy dat de heavy dew is what allus makes you niggers have de chills an' fever."

As Aunt Mary headed the procession and wended her way through the winding path that led to her cabin, I heard her admonishing the pickaninnies in this manner:

"Now you niggers keep out'n dat wet grass befo' er snake bites yer, an' you, John Henry, stop er pickin' at Christopher Napoleon, makin' him run out in dem weeds. Ef er snake bites yer, I'll go right on an' leave you here an' let him swallow you, now you hear what I say. De fust thing you niggers know, de Klu Klux'll ride up on dere hosses an' carry you off to de woods—den yer old mammy won't never see you no mo'. Dat looks lak 'em now, ridin' 'long de road by de fence, cluckin' lak er old hen wid er lot er young chickens, sayin': 'Kluck-kluck-kluck-Klu-Klux!'"

Uncle Tom and the Widow Jenkins

Come here, Aunt Patience, an' see what er lot of bundles 'Lias is fetchin' us," cried Aunt Tilda, one of the servants on the Briers plantation, as she stood in the door of the kitchen and shaded her eyes from the rays of the sun.

"Did you git dat bottle of liniment, lak I told you?" she called before 'Lias had a chance to get up the steps.

"Yassum, I fetched hit for you," replied 'Lias, laughing, "but I had to pay 10 cents mo' for hit den you'se bin in de habit of payin', kase de clerk in de drug sto' said dat de price dun gone up sence de hurricane."

"Fer Gawd sake!" cried the old servant. "Hit seems dat 'long as de hurricane dun swept dis place, de same lak hit did Natchez an' Vidalia, de price oughter be down, 'stead er jumpin up lak dat. I'se mighty glad to git hit anyway, even ef hit do cost er dime mo', kase my rheumatiz is lots wuss dis week den hit ever wuz befo' an' ef you hadn't fetched hit Marse Albert 'lowed he'd have to send you 'cross de river to-night, to git de doctor," she added, taking the bottle and tearing off the wrapper.

"Did you git dat muslin for my dress an' dem blue beads an' dat coral breastpin lak Sis' Lucy bought for her gal to wear to de picnic?" inquired Lucetta, the housemaid, as she ran into the kitchen and began anxiously examining the bundles as 'Lias placed them on the table.

"An' did you fetch dat blue-checked shirting an' gingham what I wants to make some aprons for myself an' some shirts for Caleb?" questioned Aunt Patience, scanning the bundles that lay in a promiscuous heap before her.

"Yes, I brought ev'rything what you niggers told me to git, 'ceptin' de thimble what Aunt Tilda told me to git for her," answered 'Lias, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"An' how did you come to furgit dat thimble?" asked Aunt Tilda, eyeing 'Lias suspiciously.

"I didn't furgit hit, but de man in de dry goods sto' said dey wuzn't makin' dat kind no mo', an' he didn't had none lak you wanted, so I got you one lak Aunt Patience uses," explained the houseman. "Ef hit don't suit, you don't need to take hit, kase some of de wimmin will be wantin' one an' I kin sell hit for er dime an' make er nickel on hit."

"Say, 'Lias, did Tom go wid you to Natchez?" inquired Caroline, the washwoman, entering the kitchen with a big basket filled with freshly-laundered linen.

"What you ax me dat for?" questioned 'Lias.

"Kase I seed him hitchin' one of his heifers on to de back of yo' wagon when you an' Uncle Jack driv past his cabin yistiddy mornin', an' I knowed dat he wuzn't takin' her down to de river to water," replied Caroline.

"Yas, he took her up to Natchez an' sold her—now what else do you want to know?" asked the old darkey, taking a seat on the edge of the woodbox.

"An' how much did he git for dat heifer?"

"Fo'teen dollars."

"Fer Gawd sake! Wuz dat all he got?" cried Caroline, in amazement.

"Fo'teen dollars wuz ev'ry cent he got," answered 'Lias, "an he wuz lucky to git dat. He could er got mo' for her ef he had er taken my 'vice an' driv her to Natchez, 'stead of hitchin' her to de wagon an' draggin' her haf de way, kase she wuz plumb petered out when we got dere an' lost in weight."

"I don't see why Tom didn't let Caleb know dat he wuz 'tendin' to sell dat heifer," commented Aunt Patience, "kase we wuz countin' on buyin' one dis summer, an' Caleb would er gived \$20 for her an' saved



“What did dat fool nigger do wid all dat money—put hit in de bank?”

Tom all de trouble of takin' her to Natchez. I wish he had er let us know, kase dat heifer had er sprinklin' of Jersey in her, an' we would er bin glad to take her off'n Tom's hands at dat price," added the old cook, in a disappointed voice.

"What did dat fool nigger do wid all dat money—put hit in de bank?" broke in Aunt Tilda, joining the group.

"De fust think I seed him buy wuz er pair of dese here old-fashioned earbobs, an'——"

"Fer Gawd sake! Did Tom go an' fiddle dat money erway on out-o'-style jewelry lak dat?" cried Aunt Patience.

"Dey wuzn't cheap—dey wuz gold-filled, least dat's what de man in de sto' told Tom, an' den de bought er 'gement ring an'——"

"What kind of er ring wuz hit?" chorused half a dozen voices.

"Tom wuz lookin' at three or fo' diffent kinds, but de one what he bought wuz er plain gold one wid er red set in hit, an'——"

"An' how much did hit cost, 'Lias?" interrupted Aunt Tilda, as she carefully inspected the muslin dress goods which Lucetta was proudly holding up to view.

"De man wanted two dollars an' er half for hit, but Tom jewed him down er doller, an' dat only made hit cost er dollar an' fifty cents. Dem old earbobs what Tom bought wuzn't wuth er dollar, an' I told Tom so, yet de man made him pay three dollars fer 'em, an' dey out of style at dat."

"Wuz dem all de weddin' presents what he buyed?" inquired Caroline, with an inquisitive look.

"No, dat wuzn't all he buyed, kase he got Sis' Jenkins two pair of weddin' stockin's—red an' green striped ones, wid er sprinklin' of yaller runnin' through 'em, what cost two bits er pair. De man showed Tom some what wuz cheaper, but dey wuzn't nigh as fancy as de ones for two bits, so he bought

'em, at de same time nudgin' me an' sayin' dat dey looked jes lak de ones what he bought for his fust wife, when dey wuz married de fust year after de surrender."

"Law-za-me!" cried Aunt Tilda. "I 'member dem stockin's what 'Lias is talkin' erbout, kase I wuz de one what her ma axed to her cabin, to hep dress de bride."

"An' how wuz she dressed, Aunt Tilda?" asked Lucetta, as she smoothed over the folds of muslin.

"De dress wuz made out'n flowered Swiss, something lak dat muslin of your'n, 'ceptin dat hit wuz stiffer an' de flowers in hit wuz as big as dis here dinner plate—den she had on er hoopskirt what wuz ev'ry bit of six foot ercross at de bottom."

"Good Lawd!" shouted Lucetta, breaking into a hearty laugh, in which the others joined. "How did she ever git er skirt what wuz big enuff to kiver hit?"

"Why, chile, in dem days dey made de skirts powerful full, sometimes puttin' eight an' nine widths of cloth in one skirt, kase hit took er big one to kiver dem hoops. When de wind wuz blowin' strong, hit wuz all we could do to keep from bein' blowed erway, an' dere wuzn't narry er do' on dis whole plantashun what wuz wide enuff to let one of 'em through widout tiltin' 'em up."

"What color wuz de dress what de bride wore?" questioned Caroline.

"Hit had er purple ground wid raised yaller flowers on hit, an' de long, blue earbobs, what wuz longer den my fo'finger, hung down till dey touched her shoulders. You see, hit wuz 'sidered stylish in dem days for de wimmin to wear long earbobs an' big hoops, an' de one what had de biggest hoops an' de longest earbobs wuz de belle of de ball when we uster have de plantashun dances."

"Did Tom buy any weddin' clothes for hissef?" questioned Aunt Patience.

"Yas, he bought er white shirt what opened in de front, an' er celluloid collar an' er pair of low-cut tan shoes an' er seersucker coat an' vest an' er pair of striped cottonade pants an' some socks an'——"

"How did he manage to buy all dat out'n dat fo'teen dollars?" asked Caroline, in amazement.

"Tom's clothes didn't cost more'n fo' dollars," replied 'Lias, "an' sides all de udder truck he 'membered all of Sis' Jenkins' chillun wid er present."

"An' what all did he git for de chillun?" questioned Lucetta, hanging up the dust cloth.

"He bought each of 'em er sack of striped stick candy, er chaney doll wid blue eyes for de gal, er tin horn for 'Liza Jane, an' er whistle an' er rubber ball for Fred Douglas, an' de last place we went in he got er bottle of perfume for de bride."

"Whar's he gwine to git money for to pay for de license, ef he fooled erway all he got for dat heifer?" exclaimed Aunt Patience, laughing until the tears ran from her eyes.

"He's dun 'ranged all dat wid Marse Albert, kase I heard him say dat he wuz plumb broke and wanted Marse Albert to 'vance him enuff fer to git de license wid," remarked Uncle Jack, who had just entered the kitchen. "When Marse Albert axed him ef he had money to give to de parson, for tyin' de knot, Tom 'lowed dat he didn't had er cent left, but dat de preacher could wait till he got straightened out an' had er chance to sell dat udder heifer."

"I don't know what dat nigger's thinkin' erbout," commented Aunt Tilda, "when he goes to wuck an' fools his money erway on er lot er trash what ain't er gwine to do nuther one of 'em no good, an' I can't understand what Sis' Jenkins wants to marry dat old sinner for nohow, 'specially when she's got er passel of chillun to wuck for, let erlone takin' dat old bundle of bones, what's all crippled up wid de rheumatiz. I reckon she thinks dat Tom will stay 'round de house an' 'tend to

de chillun an' feed an' water de chickens while she's in de field at wuck, but Tom will have his hands full, I'm here to tell you, kase dem chillun is jes' as wild as rabbits, an' Fred Douglas is purty nigh as bad erbout gittin' in mischief as Christopher Napoleon is. No longer den last week dat debbilish boy ketched er live frog an' put hit in Sis' Millie's churn what she had settin' in de spring house, an' she never knowed hit wuz dere till she put de dasher in de churn an' noticed dat frog kickin' an' er swimmin' erround in de milk. When I comed by her cabin yistiddy, Sis' Millie wuz settin' on de do' step, wid er stick layin' 'cross her lap waitin' for dat imp of Satan, an' when she gits her han's on him his ma sho' will have er doctor bill to pay, kase Sis' Millie ain't one of dese kind what'll stand for no tricks lak dat an den laff hit off as er joke."

"I wouldn't blame her ef she'd cripple dat boy so dat he couldn't walk, kase dat milk wuz all spoilt an' she had to pour hit in de trough for de pigs," remarked Caroline. "Day befo' yistiddy, when I comed in from de field at noon, dem chillun of Sis' Jenkins' wuz in my yard wid dere dogs, chasin' my hens an' worryin' 'em so dat dey didn't lay narry er egg all day, an' when I went over to her cabin an' 'ported de matter, she 'lowed dat de chillun hadn't dun nothin' wrong—dat dey wuz only playin' an' dat she wouldn't whip 'em for me nor no udder woman on dis plantashun. I told her dat ef I ever ketched 'em inside my yard ergin, I'd take er stick an' beat 'em till dey couldn't walk—den she got mad at what I said, an' 'lowed dat she'd put de law to me ef I ever laid han's on one of her chillun. I reckon she thought she'd scare me, but she don't know me ef she thinks I'll run from any woman, an' ef I ever ketches 'em in my yard ergin, I'll——"

"You Christopher Napoleon! What you mean by draggin' dat dade snake through dis yard?" shouted Aunt Tilda, shaking her fist at the little darky. "You

better take dat snake an' fling hit in de bayou, kase ef Marse Albert sees you wid hit, tryin' fer to scare dem chillun an' make 'em have nightmare, you sho' will need er doctor. Go on now, you little imp, an' don't stand dere an' make faces at me."

"I sho' do pity dat Tom," continued Caroline, "kase he ain't uster havin' chillun erround him, an' when he gits laid up wid de rheumatiz he'll find dat he ain't got Sarah to wait on him an' rub his legs wid turpentine an' all dat medicine what he's bin usin'. Ef he had er treated Sarah half-way right, she would er bin wid him yet, but he changed soon as he got married to her an' didn't want her to go to no parties nor have no fun, an' you all knows dat er young gal lak her ain't er grwine to stand for dat."

"Dat's 'zactly what I told Tom yistiddy," said 'Lias, "an' me an' him comed mighty nigh havin' er fuss, kase I told him he kep Sarah pinned down too tight an' didn't want her to have no 'musement at no time. He 'lowed dat she had plenty to eat an' all de clothes er woman needed, but dat ain't all what er gal of Sarah's age wants in dis world, fer to make her happy an' 'tented, an' when he uster set dere in his cabin of er evenin' an' made Sarah wait on him lak er baby an' rub dem old legs of his'n till midnight, day after day, I knowed she'd up an' leave him de fust chance she got. Er nigger what comed up on de Natchez de last trip told me dat Sarah wuz on de boat, an' dat she got off at Quitman's Landin', an' dat er young buck got off wid her, so I reckon she don't care much ef dat udder rascal did 'zert her when dey got down to New Orleans, kase he wuzn't nuthin' but er dude nigger nohow, an' ef he ever dun er hard day's wuck in his life, hit wuz when he wuz in jail an' dey made him wuck."

"How comed hit dat you never set yo' cap for Sis' Jenkins, 'Lias?" questioned Caroline, giving Aunt Patience a sly wink.



“How comed hit dat you never set yo’ cap for Sis’ Jenkins, ’Lias?”

"Who, me?" replied the old houseman, scratching his woolly head.

"Yes, you," shouted Caroline. "Sis' Jenkins has er lot of money in de bank at Natchez, so dey say, an' she knows how to hang on to what she gits, I'm here to tell you."

"Ef she had er million dollars in gold and silver, an' de finest plantashun in Mississippi, I wouldn't marry dat woman," answered 'Lias, striking the edge of the woodbox violently with his clenched fist. "In de fust place, she's got too violent er temper to suit me, an' won't listen to no argyment when she sets her hade to do er thing, an' in de second place she ain't got no mo' control over dem chillun den she has over dat many wildcats. Hit don't make no diff'rence what dey do an' what debbilment dey gits into, Sis' Jenkins stan's up for 'em an' won't 'low nobody to say er word er-against 'em, an' dat's all wrong, kase some day dey'll git into trouble an' wake up an' find dereselves hangin' on de end of er rope. Dat Fred Douglass is de wust one in de lot, an' ef he ever plays er trick on me lak he did on Uncle Jack last week, I'll break ev'ry bone in his body, law or no law."

"An' what did he do to Uncle Jack?" questioned Caroline.

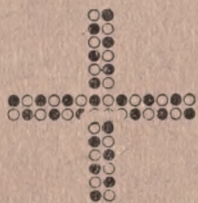
"He got er wrench an' loosened de nuts on de hind wheels of his wagon, what wuz loaded wid eight bales of cotton, an' when Uncle Jack got half way to de landin' de wheels comed off, an' 'sides flingin' dem bales clear 'cross de road, Uncle Jack fell off'n de seat an' nothin' but de good Lawd saved him from gittin' kicked to death by dem mules. As hit wuz, dey broke de pole an' kicked de whole front end of de wagon into kindlin' wood, an' ef Sis' Jenkins don't come to time an' pay Marse Albert for all de damage, she sho' will have to leave de plantashun. When Uncle Jack went to see her 'bount hit, she only laffed an' said dat all chillun got into mischief once in er while, an' den when Uncle

Jack axed her ef she wuzn't gwine to give Fred Douglas er beatin', she flared up an' grabbed de broom an' ordered him out'n de cabin."

"An' dat ain't all dat rascal's dun what's mean," commented Aunt Tilda, "kase he went in de hen house last Chewsday an' stole all de eggs what wuz in de nests, he an' de rest of de chillun takin' 'em down to de bayou an' suckin' 'em, but we got even wid him all right."

"An' how did you manage hit?" cried Caroline.

"Me an' Aunt Patience watched him de next day, kase we knowed he'd come erround after mo' eggs, an' when he went in de hen house we closed de do' an' ketched him wid his pockets full of eggs. While Aunt Patience held him by de throat wid both hands, I got er rotten egg what wuz under dat old domineck hen an' put hit in his mouth—den we both closed down on his jaws an' made him swallow de egg, shell an' all, an' now, when he sees me or Aunt Patience, he runs lak er wild deer."



Sarah's Views on Matrimony

The bright morning sun shone cheerfully in the kitchen window, where I stood watering some plants which I had brought from the front of the house in the hope of coaxing them to bloom. I had brought the shears along, and was clipping off a dead leaf here and a withered branch there, and I was glad to note that some were already beginning to lift up their drooping foliage in response to the sun's mild rays. The servants were all busy with their work—Sarah ironing, Aunt Patience washing the breakfast dishes and putting them away, while Aunt Tilda was picking over a mound of turnips, greens, collards and other vegetables, as she sang:

“Old Miss Eve sot er fishin’, wid er piece of meat
an’ bread,
When de debbil slipped up an’ put de apple in
her hade,
Tellin’ her ef she et up de core an’ all de seeds
She could have er yaller josie an’ er string of
chaney beads.”

I had been in the kitchen but a short time when I observed that Sarah, who was ironing a blue linen dress of mine, was setting the irons down with unnecessary vigor, and that they gave forth a defiant hiss as she tested them. A glance at the woman was sufficient to convince me that something had gone wrong with her.

“That dress washes beautifully, doesn’t it, Sarah?” I ventured.

“Yassum, hit sho’ do, an’ I wish I had one lak hit,” she answered, with a toss of the head. “Befo’ you comed in de kitchen I wuz er tellin’ Aunt Patience dat dis am er mighty queer world, kase some people



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has ev'rything dey wants, an' some don't have nothin'. I'se allus wucked hard all my life, but hit seems lak I never has nothin' I wants."

"Now, Sarah, you know that ain't so," remarked Aunt Patience, as she hung up the dishcloth and came over to where the woman was ironing the sleeve of my dress. "What's de use of talkin' to Miss Sammie lak dat, when you knows as well as we all does dat you has nicer clothes to wear, an' more of 'em, den any married woman on dis plantashun, an' dere ain't ernudder cabin on de place what's got mo' sto' boughten furniture in hit den your'n has. Has you furgotten dat Tom bought you er nice, big rockin' cheer fer yo' birthday, an' dat las' Christmus he bought you er fine lookin' glass fer to hang up over yer mantel? You's got carpet on de flo' an' nice red curtains to hang up over yer windows, an' I'd jes' lak to know what you wants dat you hain't got. What's de matter wid you, gal?" she questioned, giving Sarah a searching glance.

"I ain't findin' no fault wid what I'se got in de house," answered Sarah, "but I wanted to go to dat dance over at Pea Ridge las' night an' Tom wouldn't go wid me. When we comed home, he 'lowed dat he wuz too tired to go anywhar, an' me an' him had quite er fuss erbout hit, he er sayin' dat he didn't understan' what I wanted to be er gallivantin' erround, always wantin' to go to parties, an' dat he didn't see what business er married woman had to be er dancin' an' flyin' 'round all over the country. I told him dat I wuz goin', whether he went or not, but he 'lowed dat I'd better be thinkin' 'bout settlin' down, lak er good wife ought to. Den he put his foot down an' said dat I'd have to stay home."

"Well, hit wuz no wonder dat de man wuz tired," broke in Aunt Patience, "'siderin' dat he'd bin er helpin' to kill de hogs yistiddy, an' had bin up sence fo' o'clock in de mornin', cuttin' an' trimmin' young saplin's to make de poles what dey wanted fer to

swing de hogs on, an' to hang de big kittles on, fer to bile de water to scald de hogs in."

"Well," retorted Sarah, "didn't I git up at fo' 'clock, too, an' didn't I cut fat all day an' he'p render up de lard, an' grind de sassage an' clean de pig's feet an' de hades, to bile fer to make souce wid? Didn't I wuck jes' as hard as Tom did? Dat's jes' lak you, allus takin' up fer Tom an' sidin' wid him in ev'rything he does an' says.

"Doesn't he treat you kindly?" I asked. "I know that he always treated Aunt Millie very nicely, and that they always got along well together."

"Dere goes Miss Sammie, takin' up fer dat nigger, too," cried Sarah, going to the stove for a hot iron.

"Why shouldn't I speak well of him?" I asked. "He was born and raised right here on Briers, and I know that there isn't another darkey on the place that has rendered better service. No matter when he is called upon to do anything, day or night, he always does what is required cheerfully and willingly, and if I were to ask him to drive me any place this morning, he would be only too glad to do so. I haven't forgotten when 'Major' ran away with me, and how Tom galloped after him and stopped him just as we were nearing the bank of the river, and if I can ever do him a favor I certainly will not neglect the opportunity to do so. You should not overlook the fact that you are Tom's second wife, and much younger than he is, and that you have only been married a short time—three years, isn't it?"

"An' dat's three too many," commented the irate woman, "kase I don't care much erbout dat old nigger nohow. No matter ef we has lived together three years, ev'rybody knows dat I didn't marry Tom for love."

"For Gawd's sake, listen to dat gal talk!" exclaimed Aunt Tilda, stopping in the midst of her work and rocking back and forth. "Now you jes' tell Miss Sammie what you married Tom for, ef you didn't marry him kase you loved him."

"To tell you de Gawd's truth," answered Sarah, "I married dat old nigger when I wuz nothin' but er young gal an' didn't know what kind of er mess I wuz puttin' my foot in. From de time I wuz twelve years old, my mother made me wuck out by de day, washin' an' ironin', an' I never did git to keep none of de money what I made, kase dere wuz er passel of us chillun, de mos' of 'em younger den me, an' I had to he'p fill dere mouths an' keep er few rags on dere backs. I never did blame my old mammy for makin' me wuck, kase she wuz dat hard wucked hersef dat she never got time to rest from one day to de udder, an' when Tom's wife died an' he axed me to marry him, I took him kase I knowed dat he made lots of money an' dat I'd have er home of my own. 'Course, I 'lowed dat I'd have to wuck an' he'p erlong, kase wuck don't hurt nobody, an' I knowed dat when I got er little money saved up I could buy something for myse'f an' not have to give hit all to de chillun, lak I dun at home. I married Tom more to gif er good home den anything else, an' we has er good one, dat's true, but I don't want to stay in hit all de time, lak hit wuz er jail."

"Jes' listen to dat selfish nigger talk," commented Aunt Patience, getting me a dipper of lukewarm water for my plants. "I, for one, ain't got er bit er sympathy for you, kase you don't 'zerve hit."

"Well," continued Sarah, "ef you wuz in my place, you'd be er—— You Christopher Napoleon, ef you don't stop er rollin' dem marbles ercross de kitchen flo' an' quit runnin' under dis ironin' boa'd, rubbin' dem dirty feet of your'n erginst dese clothes what I'se ironin', messin' 'em all up, I'se er gwine to blister yo' back wid dis hot iron!"

"You'd better look out, boy," admonished Aunt Patience, "kase dat gal's mad dis mornin'. She didn't get to go to dat dance las' night, to show off dat purty red dress of her'n, an' ef she teches yo' hide wid dat hot iron, you'll be er smellin' burnt flesh fer er whole

week. Now mind what I tells you, boy!"

"I b'lieve 'zactly lak Aunt Patience do," said 'Lias, who had entered the kitchen a few moments before and stood near the stove, warming his hands. "I ain't got er bit of sympathy for no young gal what marries er man what's old enuff to be her gran'pa, jes' to git er home, an' ef she makes her bed hard, let her lay on hit an' not go 'round howlin' lak er hit dog. Sarah oughter 'sidered all dis befo' she married Tom, kase she might er knowed dat no old man lak him wuz er gwine to be takin' her erround to parties an' dances. lettin' de young bucks dance wid his wife whilst he takes er back seat an' plays wall flower. Ef er gal can't make up her mind to give up all sech things befo' she's married, she ain't got no business tyin' up wid er old man."

"Well, didn't he take me fur an' near to parties an' to picnics an' to de 'tracted meetin's, an' to ev'ry-thing he heard of?" protested Sarah. "He allus 'tended lak he felt as young as he ever did in his life, an' when he wuz cou'tin' me he uster cut de pigeon wing an' carry on wuss'n any of de young niggers. Ev'ry time I wants to go anywhar now, he jes' shets up in his shell lak er clam, an' narry er step will he go, an' I'm here to tell you dat I'se er gettin' powerful tired of stayin' home all de time."

"Long as you say dat you married Tom fer to git er home, you oughter be satisfied an' stay dere," continued 'Lias, with a sly wink at Aunt Patience.

"You git out'n dis kitchen, nigger!" exclaimed Sarah, giving 'Lias a savage look. "I didn't ax you for no sympathy, an' I don't want none of hit from you, an' ef you don't stop er teasin' me, I'll up wid dis iron an' scrape some of de wool off'n your hade. I don't care ef Tom is gittin' old—he's as good er husban' as you'd ever make for er woman."

"Dar now, who throwed dat brick?" shouted Aunt Tilda, who had been listening attentively to the conversation.

"You kin all say what yer please," continued 'Lias, "but marriage ain't nothin' but er lot'ry nohow—sometimes you draws er small prize, but de mos' of de time you gits er blank. Far as I'm 'cerned, I'd jes' as leef take pot luck by pickin' out er wife dat I never sot eyes on befo', kase I'd stan' jes' as good er chance of gittin' one dat suited me as ef I had bin cou'tin' her fer er solid year."

"You lyin' nigger, you knows better'n dat!" cried Sarah; "kase ef er——"

"No, sirree," answered 'Lias, moving toward the door, "I b'lieve dat ef you 'lowed er dozen men an' wimmin to choose dere wives an' husban's by lot, widout ever seein' each udder, de chances is dat dey'd be jest as happy as ef dey had knowed each other befo', kase yer can't never tell what kind of er wife er gal is gwine to make till you's already got yer hade in de noose. I b'lieve dat er woman would stan' de same chance as er man, kase she can't tell er thing 'bout what kind of er husban' she's gittin' till after she's hitched up to him in de marriage harness."

"I don't want to marry no nigger what I hasn't seed befo', said Sarah, placing the scorching hot iron on the pillow slip she had just commenced ironing. "No, indeed, I wants to git er look at him fust, an' 'Lias is de same. He wouldn't no mo' think of marryin' er woman what he'd never seed, den he would of flyin', an' I knows he wouldn't. Ef 'Lias had er chance to——. You Christopher Napoleon, ef you crawls under dat ironin' boa'd ergin, scrapin' dem muddy feet of your'n ergainst dese clean pillow slips, I'll pop you 'longside de hade wid dis hot iron. Ef you thinks I won't do hit, jes' you keep er foolin' wid me, boy!"

"I knows one couple dat got married befo' dey had bin 'quainted two weeks," continued 'Lias, "an dey seems as happy as dey kin be. You knows who I means, Aunt Patience."

"Does yer mean Bill Graham?" she asked.

"Dat's de one," replied 'Lias. "Don't you 'member when he comed down here from Natchez an' wanted to hire out to Marse Albert? He didn't have no place for him, so he went over an' hired out to Mister Horton, over at de Oaks, whar Susie Wilson wuz wuckin' as cook. Now, she never sot eyes on Bill till he comed dere lookin' fer wuck, but de minute he seed Susie he wuz hade over heels in love wid her. Dat very night, whilst dey wuz eatin' dere supper in de kitchen he up an' told her dat he loved her, but she 'lowed dat time would tell, an' dat ef she laked him at de end of de year, an' he wuz satisfied wid her, den hit would be time enuff to think erbout gittin' married. Bill begged dat gal to marry him for more'n er week, but she kept puttin' him off an' wouldn't give him no 'cided answer. One day, when she wuz right in de midst of cookin' de dinner, Bill seed her run toward de smokehouse, arter some lard. What did he do but sneak up an' slammed de do' an' locked Susie in! She begged him to let her out, tellin' him dat she knowed de dinner wuz sho' to burn, but he told her he wouldn't let her out till she promised to marry him de next night at prayer meetin'. Susie battered on de do' an' begged Bill to open hit, tellin' him dat she could smell de dinner burnin', but Bill wouldn't open hit till she promised to marry him. She told me dat afternoon, when I went over dere to take Mister Horton er message for Marse Albert, dat she didn't have no notion of keepin' dat promise, but Bill went erround tellin' ev'rybody dat dey wuz er gwine to be married dat week, 'rectly arter prayer meetin', so Susie didn't see how she could back out. Sho' enuff, dey wuz married, an' I'd lak to have somebody show me er happier pair of niggers den dey is."

"Jes' you wait," cried Sarah. "Dey ain't bin married quite er year yet, an' hit ain't too late for 'em to fall out an' git divorcement papers. Ef hit had bin me dat he locked up an' he tried to make me promise to marry him befo' he'd let me out, de minute I got back

in dat kitchen I'd er got er gourd of bilin' water an' scalded him wid hit."

"No you wouldn't," said 'Lias, "kase er gal laks to have her beau determined, an' Susie wuz as tickled over hit as she could be. She knowed dat he had will power what wuz stronger den her'n, an' dat's what er gal laks in her husban'. Ef Tom had er gin you er good lickin' de fust week you wuz married he never would er had trouble wid you, an' you'd er thought dat he wuz de onlies' man er livin'. Many er man has los' er good wife by bein' too good an' kind to her, when, ef he'd er lit into her an' whaled de life out'n her, she would er settled down an' made er good wife. Dar's Wash Smith—look at him. Dat nigger's got de best wife of any man on dis place, an' he'd only bin married er short time when she comed er walkin' home from church one night wid dat yaller nigger what uster be 'sidered such er fine preacher. De minute Wash heard 'em talkin' outside he jumped out'n de bed an' mos' beat de life out'n his wife befo' Marse Albert heard de racket an' made 'em stop."

"Ef dat had bin me," cried Sarah, "I sho' would er fixed dat nigger for er trip to de hospital, an' when dey turned him erloose he would er runned ever arterwards when he seed anything what looked lak me. I sho' would er fixed dat nigger, an' dat's de Gawd's truth," she added, setting the sizzling iron down with a bang.

"You'd better be good to Tom, kase he might take er notion to beat you some night when you comes home from church wid er stray nigger," ventured Aunt Tilda.

"Ef dat man ever lays one of his black han's on me I sho' will make business pick up wid him, kase I wouldn't 'low no nigger to beat me, not even my own father," cried Sarah, angrily, making a dive for Christopher Napoleon, who had ventured too near the ironing board.

The darkey scented danger, however, and sprang



"You git right out'n dis kitchen!"

through the open door in time to avoid being burnt with the hot iron.

Standing in the door, Sarah shouted: "I jes' dare you to come back in dis kitchen while I'se here, you black imp of Satan. Ef I lays my han's on you, boy, yer old granny sho' will have er job makin' poultices to put on de place where I burns you. You hear what I say, don't you?"

"When er woman marries er man," continued 'Lias, "he natchelly 'spects her to——"

"You git right out'n dis kitchen, 'Lias!" cried Sarah, advancing toward him, brandishing the hot iron above her head. "I'se tired of hearin' you talkin 'bout folks marryin' stray niggers what dey never heard of befo', kase you don't think dat way an' I knows you don't."

"Dere ain't no doubt in my mind whether hit am best to marry for love or jes' to git er home," commented Aunt Patience, "kase I knows well enuff dat ef folks don't marry for love dese days dey sho' won't live happy together. Now, dere's dat gal Rose of mine, what married er po' strip of er boy kase she loved him an' he loved her. She's only 21 an' she's got fo' chillun, yet dey's de happiest niggers in de whole of Adams county. Dey both wucks mighty hard, an' while dey ain't got as nice er furnished cabin as Sarah has, dey's gittin' erlong well as anybody 'round here. When Caleb went to visit her las' month an' he axed her ef she wuzn't sorry kase she had so many chillun to pervide for, she laffed an' said dat she didn't mind havin' so many, an' dat she'd ruther be wid Belton an' live on bread an' water den to eat turkey an' pound cake wid er nigger what she didn't love."

A few days later, when I entered the kitchen, I heard Aunt Patience remark to Aunt Tilda: "I reckon dat Sarah an' Tom's dun made up, kase I seed 'em goin' by here jes' now, walkin' toward dere cabin, arm in arm."

"Dey sho' has made up," answered Aunt Tilda, "kase

Sarah wuz tellin' me las' night dat Tom dun brought her er nice new stan' table for dere front room, an' I knows dat she's bin er wantin' dat table for er long time. Tom's plumb foolish 'bout dat gal, even ef she is giddy an' wants to go to all de dances, an' dat shows what er man'll do fer er gal ef he loves her. We all knows dat his fust wife wucked hard an' did all she could to he'p erlong, but hit wuz lak pullin' teeth to git him to buy her anything for de house what cost money. Sarah wuz er tellin' me 'bout er party dress what she seed in er sto' in Natchez what dey wants \$20 for, an' I'll bet she gits dat money out'n Tom befo' de sun goes down, now you mark what I say. I knowed dat she'd—You Grover Clevelan', go outside an' wipe yo' feet befo' you comes in dis kitchen, trackin' mud all over de flo' what me an' Aunt Patience jes' finished scrubbin'. Ef you leaves er mark on dat flo', I'll break ev'ry bone in yo' body, boy!"



When the Cowboys Visited the Plantation

"Fer de Lawd sake! Come here quick, Aunt Patience, an' see what debbilment dem chillun is up to now!" shrieked Aunt Tilda, one of the faithful old servants on the Briers plantation, at the same time sticking her head out of the kitchen window that overlooked the back yard where a dozen or more little pickaninnies were playing under a large pecan tree.

"What on earth am er happenin' to dem chillun now?" cried the old cook, throwing her apron over her head and running down the back steps. Before I could get to the window and see what was going on, I heard her exclaim:

"What in de name of Gawd does you mean, boy? Ain't you got no better sense den to be twistin' dat rope erround dat chile's neck lak dat, tryin' your level best fer to choke him? Ever sence dem cowboys struck dis plantashun, you debbilish youngsters ain't thought of nothin' else but tryin' to hang somebody, an' I 'lows dat you ain't er gwine to stop till some of you has yer neck broke. Now you untwis' dat rope dis minute an' take dat chile out'n dat swing befo' I breaks ev'ry bone in yo' body. You hear what I say, don't you?"

"Hit wuzn't me dat twisted de rope—Fred Douglas dun hit," said one of the little darkies, breaking into a fit of crying.

"Whar is dat debbilish boy?" exclaimed Aunt Patience, at the same time grabbing one of the little darkies by the shoulder and giving him a vicious shake. "Ef I ketches you chillun foolin' wid dat rope ergin, I'se gwine to string de last one of you up by de heels an' let you hang lak dat till de sun goes down—now you mind what I say."

Much to the amusement of his companions, the guilty little culprit sprang well out of the old cook's reach and began walking on his hands.

"Ef I lays my hands on you jes' once, you black imp, I'll teach you how to walk on yo' hands an' crack dem heels in my face," cried Aunt Patience, reaching for the limb of a chinaberry tree and breaking off a branch the size of an ax handle. "Jes' you try dat heel-crackin' business ergin an' I'll show you who's de boss 'round here, no matter what yo' ma says erbout hit. Ef Marse Albert ketches you actin' smart lak dat 'round here, he'll drive ev'ry one of you off'n dis plantashun, dat's what he will, kase he told me an' Aunt Tilda yistiddy dat he didn't want you niggers to be hangin' round de kitchen all de time, eatin' enuff vittels fer to feed de troops of Jericho an' doin' nothin' to earn yo' boa'd. Clear out of here now, de last one of you, an' don't let me ketch you in dis yard ergin to-day," commanded the angry old cook, throwing the stick to one side and starting for the kitchen, where she met Caroline going up the steps that led to the back porch.

"What on earth is gittin' into dese chillun here lately, Aunt Patience?" asked the old washwoman, as she dropped the empty clothes hamper near the open door and sat down in a near-by chair.

"Dem chillun has bin foolin' wid dat swing all mornin', twistin' hit erround an' 'round; den dey'd turn hit erloose, to see hit whirl an' untwis' lak er top spinnin'," explained Aunt Tilda, as she rocked back and forth, stringing the green beans she was preparing for the noon meal. "Dey wuzn't doin' er bit of harm till dat debbilish boy of Sis' Jenkins' comed up here erwhile ergo an' 'gun to show Christopher er new trick, by havin' one of de chillun put his hade in de noose an' den twistin' de rope till de po' chile wuz most strangled, an' ef I hadn't er seed 'em in time an' called Aunt Patience when I did, dey would er had dat chile er floatin'

up in de flowery kingdom by dis time. Ever sence dat Bud Gillespie an' 'Broncho Charley' comed here to visit Marse John, I'se had to set by dat window, where I could keep er sharp lookout on de back yard, kase dere ain't no tellin' what mischief dem chillun will be up to an' some of 'em is liable to git killed."

"Dat's de fo'th time I'se had to run out in de yard sence breakfast, to keep dem chillun out'n mischief," declared Aunt Patience, giving the cook table a vigorous shove against the wall and hanging up the dishcloth, "an' de next time I ain't er gwine to bother wid 'em, ef dey do holler, kase I'se gittin' plumb out o' patience wid 'em."

"I don't see what's gittin' into dem chillun here lately," remarked Caroline, "kase when Sis' Millie comed home yistiddy from visitin' her daughter what's sick over at Pea Ridge, she found dat all three of Sis' Jenkins' chillun had bin at her cabin, an' what you reckon dem black rascals dun gone an' dun?"

"De Lawd only knows, kase I don't," answered Aunt Patience, with a look of interest.

"What did they do, Sis' Calline?" questioned Aunt Tilda, stopping in the midst of her work.

"Dey had two young pups an' fo' of Sis' Millie's cats hangin' to de clothes line, an' dat old Muscovy duck what has bin sittin' in dat hollow sass'fras tree down nigh de fence wuz er hangin', hade down, from de limb of dat big chanyberry tree."

"Fo' Gawd! It dat true?" exclaimed Aunt Tilda, in astonishment.

"Wuz dat de duck what 'Sis' Millie wuz 'spectin' fer to hatch out next Saturday?" interrupted Aunt Patience.

"Yassum, dat's de same one," answered Caroline, with a hearty laugh, "kase Sis' Millie sot her on de Saturday when we had dat big wind storm, an' dat would be fo' weeks dis comin' Saturday. When Sis' Millie axed dem chillun what dey meant by hangin' dat duck

lak dat dey said dat dey took her off'n de nest kase dey couldn't wade in deep water in dat pond an' ketch none of de udders; an' one of Sis' Jenkins' boys told 'em hit would bring 'em bad luck ef dey hanged er cat an' no duck. After dey got de eggs what de duck wuz settin' on, an' dey——"

"And what did dey do wid de eggs?" broke in Lu-cetta, who had just entered the kitchen.

"Dey made Sis' Millie's youngest gal stand up 'long-side de cabin, an' den dey 'gun to throw dem eggs at her. When dey wuz all used up dey went in de henhouse an' got some mo' what wuz under er hen settin' in de corner, an' by de time dey got through dat po' chile smelt wuss den er polecat."

"Fer Gawd sake—listen to dat!" shouted Aunt Tilda, holding up both hands.

"After dey dun got through wid dat performance," continued Caroline, "dey tried to ketch dat old gray goose what's er settin' in dat hollow log nigh de path what leads to de spring under de hill; but when they dragged her off'n de nest dat ole white gander what allus stands guard over hits mate jumped at 'em an' grabbed one of de gals by de dress, draggin' her to de ground, an' den he flapped his wings an' beat her so dat she wuz mighty glad to get erway erlive, I'm here to tell you."

"Den dey didn't harm de goose, eh?" inquired Aunt Tilda.

"'Deed dey didn't, kase when dat gander got through wid 'em dey wuz all glad to keep out'n dat yard an' let her erlone."

"An' what is Sis' Millie gwine to do about it?" asked Aunt Patience.

"She says dat she's gwine ter see er lawyer an' make Sis' Jenkins pay fer all dat damage, but I——"

"Well, I kin tell her right now dat she kin put all de money in one corner of her eye what she gits out'n Sis' Jenkins for damages," continued Aunt Tilda, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Aunt Tilda's right erbout dat, kase Sis' Jenkins never wuz known to pay er red cent for nothin' dem debbilish chillun of her'n has 'stroyed," remarked 'Lias, as he came into the kitchen and deposited a hat full of fresh eggs into the half-filled egg basket that sat on the back of the cook table. "Dem chillun of her'n ain't de onliest ones what's gittin' into mischief 'round here sence dat Bud Gillespie an' his partner comed here an' upset things so, kase when I runned over to Sis' Lucy's cabin dis mornin' to borrow er hoe to kill er snake wid, what you reckon I found dere?" added the old houseman, with a glance around the kitchen.

"De Lawd only knows! What did you find, 'Lias?" exclaimed Caroline, full of interest.

"Well, sir, when I jumped de back fence, dar wuz her youngest boy er hangin' to de limb of er chany-berry tree, givin' er twitch now an' den, lak er rooster does after I'se chopped hits hade off an' hit's erbout dade, an' ef I hadn't er comed jes' when I did we would er had ernudder fun'rel on dis plantashun."

"Wuz he hung wid er rope, 'Lias?" questioned Lucetta.

"No, but wid er long willow," answered the houseman. "Hit wuz lucky dat hit wuzn't er rope, kase he would er bin dade long befo' I got dere an' cut him down. Me an' Sis' Lucy wucked over dat chile er long time befo' we fetched him back to life, an' I had to draw de third bucket of water out'n dere well an' pour hit on his hade befo' we could see er sign of life in de chile's body."

"Who wuz hit dat hung de chile?" asked Aunt Tilda.

"Sis' Lucy says dat hit wuz dun by er nigger boy what lives over on Glasscock's Island, but I seed Sis' Jenkins' boy runnin' through de cotton field whilst I wuz chasin' dat snake, an' I 'lows dat he knows mo' erbout hit den anybody else. He wuz——"

"Fer de Lawd sake!" cried Aunt Tilda, running to the door. "If dem chillun ain't back here, er worryin'

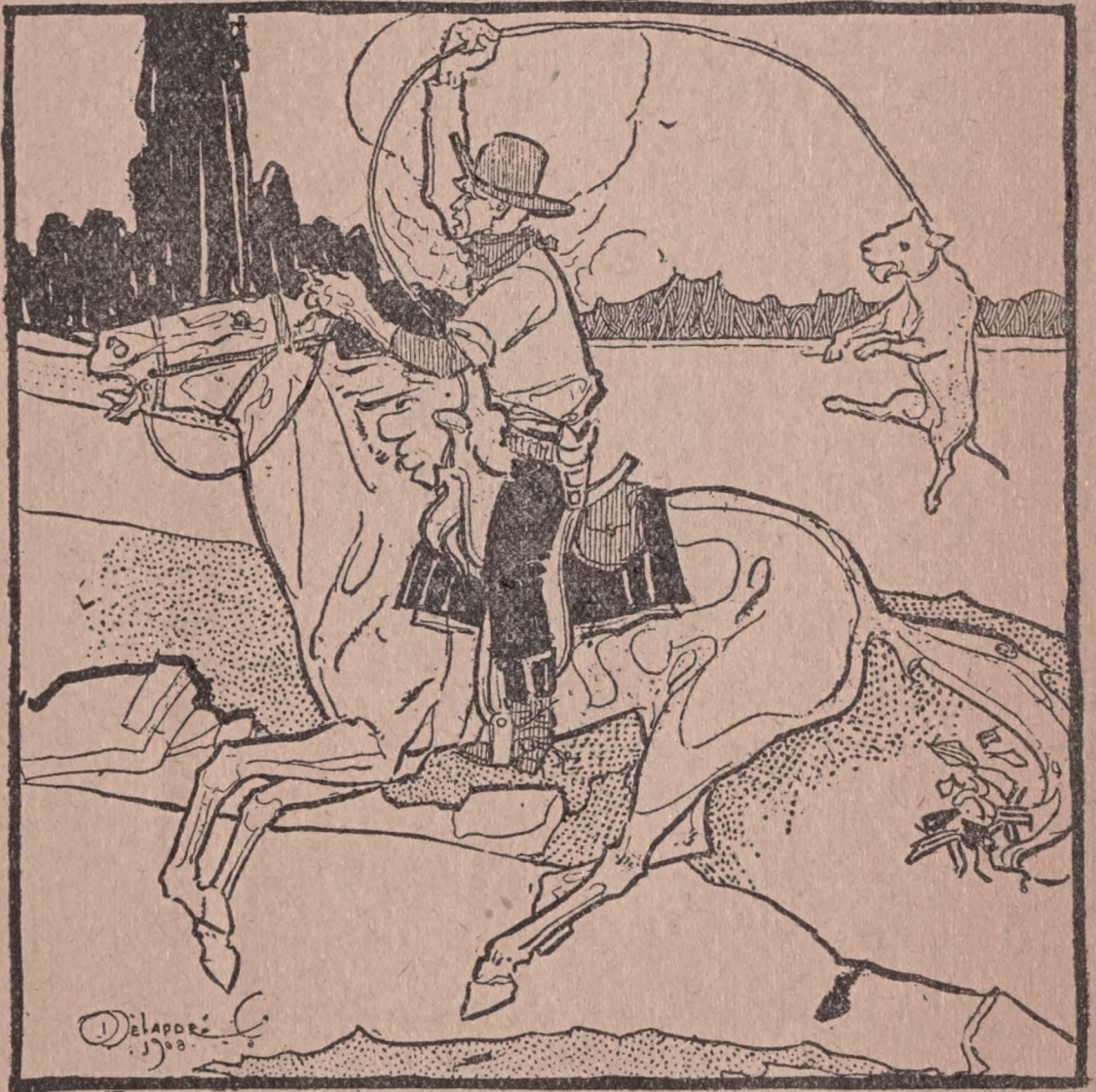


“What you chillun doin’ out dere?”

de life out'n Miss Genie's calf, chasin' hit erround de yard an' tryin' fer to ride on hits back. What you chillun doin' dere?" she shouted, loud enough to be heard in Natchez.

"I wish dem cowboys had er staid in Wyoming, whar dey b'long," continued 'Lias, "kase we ain't had nothin' but 'citement an' trouble ever sence dey's bin here. De fust day dey wuz here, Marse John took 'em out to de big pasture lot an' 'lowed 'em to ride dat colt what Marse Albert thinks so much of, dey er spurrin' hit an' makin' hit buck an' rear up on hits hind feet. Bud Gillespie says dat hit ain't nothin' lak de ones what dey has out on de plains, an' dat hit wuz easier to ride den er billy goat, but I wouldn't straddle dat colt an' take de shakin' up what he got for er hundred dollars. He says dat dey has hosses out dere what'll buck an' fight ev'ry time de saddle is put on 'em, an' dat er hoss ain't 'sidered no 'count less'n he'll buck an' pitch, but I don't want to ride none of 'em ef dey's any wuss den dat colt."

"Dey comed over to my place dis mornin', 'rectly arter we had breakfust," remarked Caroline, "an' when I looked out de window to see what mischief dey wuz up to, dey had er rope 'round Jackson's neck an' wuz draggin' him all over de yard, dey tellin' him dat's de way dey ropes steers out on de prairie. Marse John never did had no use for dat bulldog of Sis' Jenkins', an' when hit comed er nosin' 'round de back fence an' Marse John seed hit he told one of de cowboys dat he could have de dog ef he could rope hit. De next thing I seed er rope goin' through de air, an' whilst I didn't see 'em do hit, Caleb told me dat dey dragged hit down to de river an' flung hit in; den dey 'gun to shoot at hit an' put so many holes through de dog's skin dat hit sunk outer sight an' went down wid de current. When Sis' Jenkins comed er runnin' down to de river an' axed ef dey had seed anything of her bulldog, one of de cowboys threw er rope over her hade an' comed



“Marse John told one of de cowboys dat he could have de dog ef he could rope hit.”

mighty nigh throwin' her in de river, too. I wish dey had er gin her er good duckin' befo' dey turned her loose, kase I ain't got no use for dat woman, an' I never will have till she keeps dem chillun of her'n at home an' makes 'em 'have dereselves."

"What was all the fuss about down around the quarters last night?" I asked.

"I must tell you erbout dat, Miss Sammie," answered Caroline, laughing heartily. "Dem cowboys comed down dere wid Marse John an' showed us how de Injuns holds dere pow-wows an' dances, but we'se all hopin' an' prayin' dat dey won't come no mo'. Dere must er bin over three hundred of us niggers watchin' 'em dance an' cut up, but when dey grabbed Jackson an' put er rope 'round his neck an' said dey wuz gwine to scalp him an' burn him at de stake, dem niggers scattered lak sheep; den when dey got on dere hosses an' rode up an' down in front of de cabins, shootin' dere 'volvers an' whoopin' lak dey wuz mad, de niggers all closed dere do's an' bolted 'em, an' long arter dey had gone an' I wanted my old man to go to de well an' git me er bucket of water, he wuz too scared to go outside de cabin. I wanted dat water awful bad, to wash out er few things befo' I went to bed, but I didn't want hit bad enuff to go to no well for hit, I'm here to tell you."

"Dey both went out to Hutzell's lake wid Marse John yistiddy mornin', broke in 'Lias, "but dere war'n't no fishin' widin' er hundred miles of de place where dey stopped, kase dey wuz all shootin' at de cranes an' at alligators all de way to de place where dey 'spected to fish. John Hughes wuz wid 'em, an' he says dat Bud Gillespie jumped in de lake an' tried to ride er alligator what he shot an' wounded an' what wuz splashin' 'round in de water, but I don't b'lieve dat—deed I don't. Dere is some alligators in dat lake what's more'n forty foot long, kase I'se bin dere huntin' 'em mo' times den I has fingers an' toes, an' dere ain't nobody 'round dis



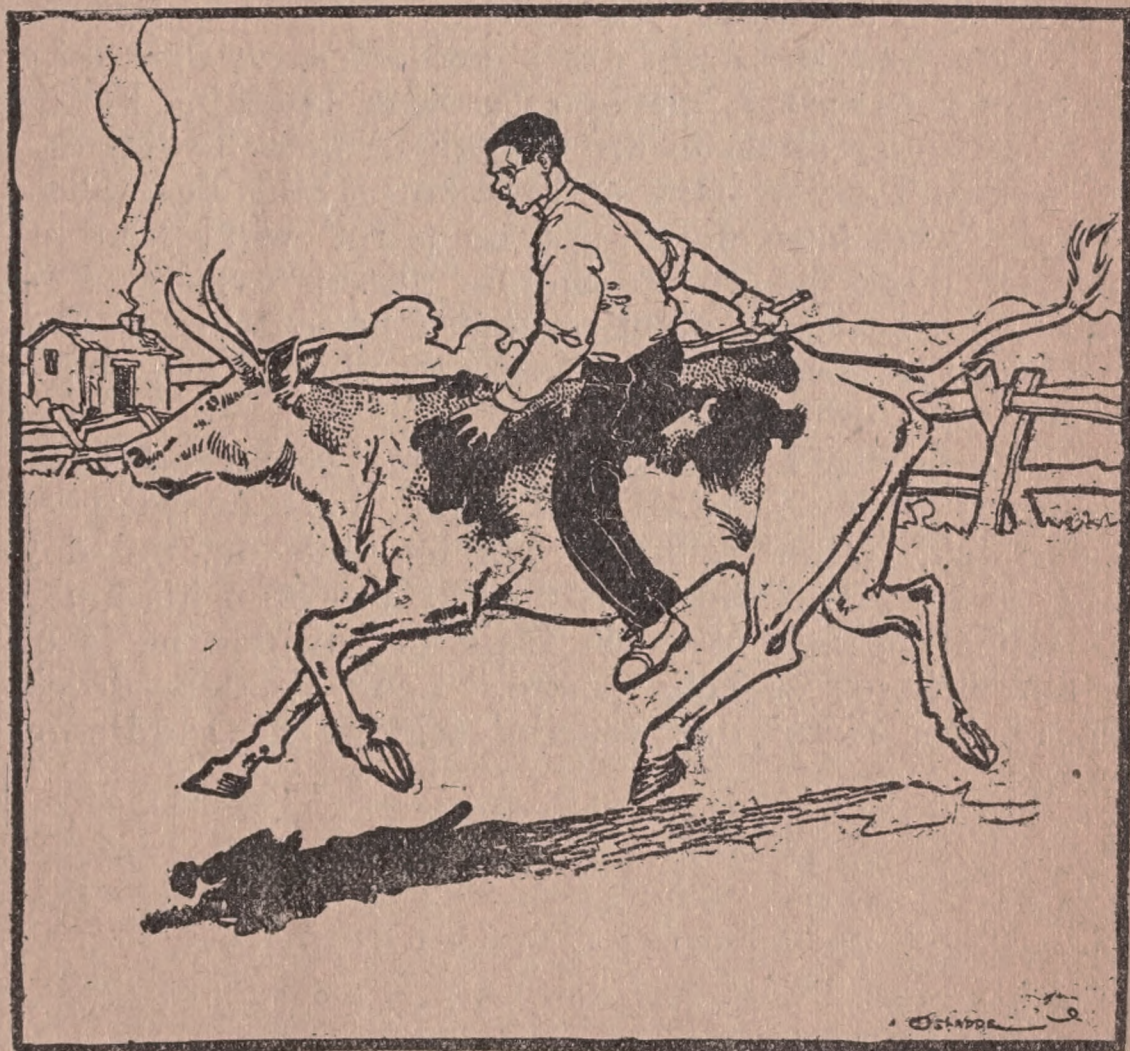
“Marse John.”

part of de country what's got de nerve to jump in de water an' try to ride one of 'em, an' dat ain't no lie."

"When dey wuz over at our place dis mornin'," said Caroline, "dey told my old man dat dere is great big mountains out in Wyoming what's covered wid snow all de year 'round, an' dat hit never melts, winter nor summer, but I don't b'lieve dat, kase I knows hit ain't so. I knows dere's lot er snow out dere, kase I'se heard other people what's bin out dere say so, 'sides I'se seed pictures of hit in books, but dey might as well go out in de barn yard an' talk to de chickens as to try an' make me b'lieve dat de snow ever gits three an' fo' feet deep, or dat dey has to take er ax to chop holes through de ice in de creeks to git water to drink an' cook wid. One of 'em said dat de ice on de creeks an' rivers often gits so thick in de winter time out dere dat dey kin drive er wagon 'cross hit, an' when I looked at Marse John an' axed him ef dat wuz really so, he laffed an' said dat hit wuz de truth, yet he knew dat boy wuz tellin' er lie. Dey's all goin' out in de swamps tomorrow to hunt for bear, but dey can't git no nigger on dis plantashun to go 'long wid 'em, I'll bet on dat."

"Why so?" I asked.

"Kase dey says dey ain't er gwine to carry nothin but 'volvers an' rifles, an' you can't git no nigger to tackle er bear less'n he's got er shotgun, you hear me. Dere's mighty few niggers 'round here what's got de nerve to go bear huntin' when dey's got er shotgun an' plenty of ammunition, an' de most of de hunters ketches 'em in traps an' den shoots 'em, but Marse John an' dem cowboys says dat ain't de way dey hunts game, dey claimin' dat even er animal oughter have some chance to fight for his life. Dey's bin tryin' for two days to git my old man to promise to go wid 'em on dat hunt, but dey could offer him er thousand dollars an' den he wouldn't go—dat he wouldn't. I heard Marse John tellin' dem cowboys dat dere wuzn't nothin' but little bits o' cubs 'round here, an' dat none of 'em



"Look yonder—dere's one of 'em ridin' dat yearlin' widout no
saddle or bridle."

would weigh over 300 pounds, but I'se got er piece of crepe all ready to put on his do' ef he goes arter dem bear widout er shotgun, no matter ef he do say dey's only cubs."

"How about the baptizing next Sunday—do you expect much of a crowd?" I asked.

"No'am, kase dat's bin postponed till arter dese here cowboys goes erway," replied Caroline, laughing heartily. "Brudder Jackson an' de parson both 'lowed dat hit wouldn't do to have er baptizin' whilst dese cowboys is here, kase dere ain't no tellin' what kind o' mischief dey'd be up to, an' de parson over at Pea Ridge has heard so much erbout dere cuttin' up dat he's 'fraid to come over an' hold any kind of er service whilst dey's on de plantashun."

"I knows why he's so skeert of 'em," remarked 'Lias, grinning. "Dey ketched him ridin' 'long de road de udder day, talkin' to hissef lak he allus do, an' dey rode up an' roped him an' dragged him off'n his mule, an' sence dat he's bin mo' 'fraid of 'em den he is of er moccasin or er hoop snake. Look yonder—dere's one of 'em ridin' dat yearlin' widout no saddle or bridle!"



Christmas 'Way Down South in the Land o' Cotton

From where I leaned lazily back in my comfortable rocker on the broad veranda of the manager's residence at Briers plantation, I could get a splendid view of the grand old Mississippi river, while the bright rays of mellow sunshine made its yellow waters gleam like scales of shimmering, burnished gold. The long Spanish moss, stirred by a soft Southern breeze, swung lazily back and forth from the branches of the stately live oaks on the lawn, while a bevy of bright-plumed red-birds were singing and twittering from every bough, seemingly trying to outrival the rollicking, frolicking little pickaninnies, who were happily rolling on the soft grass beneath them. It was the day before Christmas, and the darkies were almost wild and merry-mad in joyous anticipation of the good time in store for them, for in no place in the wide world has Christmas so deep a meaning as to the Southern child, be it white or black. It is the golden milestone from which he measures everything—the season that divides his years, in which is centered all the joys and anticipations of his young heart. For weeks before its coming, his whole being fairly thrills with excitement and pleasure at the very thought of the presents he is to receive, and of the freedom he will have during the holidays; he hoards up every nickel he can get, to invest in pin-wheels, Roman candles, firecrackers and other explosives, for Christmas, without lots of noise, would seem tame indeed to his overwrought, excited imagination.

My revery was broken by the approach of Aunt Patience, the faithful old cook, exclaiming:

“Honey, don't yer want to come in de kitchen fer er

minute, to stir de plum puddin', lak all de res' has done? Yassum, Marse Frank, Marse Albert, Marse John, Miss Genie, an' all de white folks 'ceptin' you has dun had dere turn at stirrin' hit. Why, la, honey, has yer done forgot dat hit brings good luck fer de New Year, when all de members of de family has stirred de Christmus plum puddin'? Well, I do decla', you has bin erway so long dat you has mos' furgot ev'rything 'bout de way you wuz brung up! Well does I 'member one Christmus when yer gran'pa wuz er stayin' here wid Miss Frances. Hit wuz your fust Christmus in de world, an' he had you in his arms when I called him fer to come an' stir de puddin'. I kin see him now, honey, standin' dere, holdin' you over de big mixin' bowl, an' puttin' de spoon in your tiny little han', so dat you could stir hit befo' he did, an' dere stood yer mother, tryin' fer to keep back de tears what wuz er gatherin' in her sweet violet blue eyes, kase she knowed dat her good ole father's days wuz numbered an' dat he would soon leave us an' go to er better world. Sho' nuff, honey, de angels did come fer him de next spring, but he wuz er good man, an' dey found him ready and er waitin' when de Marsa called him."

"Why is it, Aunt Patience, that you make the pudding oblong?" I asked, as I stood at the cook's side and watched her molding it.

"Why, honey," she replied, "I allus makes hit in de shape of de manger, wid de chopped meat made of mutton, kase de shepherds watched dere flocks on dat gran' night when de blessed Savior wuz born—dat's what yer mother allus uster tell us. I'se got to hurry, chile, an' git through wid my bakin', kase Sis Calline an' 'Lias an' Uncle Jack an' me is er gwine to take de chllun out to de edge of de swamp, fer to gather some pine, an' cedars an' mistletoe an' holly, fer to use in decoratin' de house, an' I'm here to tell you dat dere won't be no purtier dinin'-room nowhar den what we'll

have when we gits through. Hit jes' wouldn't seem lak hit wuz Christmus at all ef we didn't have de whole house decorated, an' Sis' Calline tells me dat dem narcissus what Miss Genie's bin er waterin' wid lukewarm water, to fo'ce em to grow, has 'gun to show dere purty white petals an' golden centers. By to-morrow dey'll all be wide open an' in full bloom, an' when dey's banked up on de sideboa'd an' on de high mantel, dey sho' will look purty 'mongst de green leaves of de holly, fillin' de whole room with sweet perfume.

"Dere ain't bin er Christmus since I kin 'member dat we didn't have er lot of flowers er bloomin' fer to brighten up dis ole house, an' lots of mistletoe, wid its white, waxy berries er shinin' through de yallerish green of hits leaves. Yassum, I'se often heard yer mother say dat de mistletoe bloomed in de springtime, when de perfume of de apple blossoms an' de roses wuz er makin' de air fragrant, but she uster tell us dat hit waits till Christmus fer to ripen hits berries in clusters of three, fer to bring our minds to de holy trinity. She uster tell us dat de holly, wid hits prickly leaves, represented de crown of thorns, an' de bright red berries de draps of blood. Why, honey, hit jes' seems lak hit wuz no longer'n yistiddy when yer mother, wid her sweet angel face, uster come out in de kitchen, where I'd be er cookin' an' gittin' things ready fer de Christmus feast, she er settin' over dere by dat big open fireplace, de blaze from de roarin' logs makin' her pretty cheeks glow lak two big red roses; an' how her eyes would light up an' sparkle whilst she wuz er tellin' us erbout de time when de shepherds watched dere flocks dat night, an' how de big, bright star wuz er shinin' in de East, proclaimin' de birth of de Savior what wuz to bring peace an' good will to all men, both black an' white, an' how his bed wuz nothin' but er manger, kase dere wuzn't no room at de hotel fer him, an' dat's why she allus had me make de plum puddin' in de shape of er manger, so dat hit would represent

de manger of Bethlehem. Sence Miss Frances went to live wid de angels, we ain't had nobody to tell us 'bout de Christ chile, lak she uster tell us.

"I tried to make de best of hit, for de chillun's sake, but Christmas sho' ain't what hit uster be," she continued, heaving a deep sigh.

"Kin you 'member de time, honey, when we uster have do dog irons piled clean up to de top wid wood, an' how you and Zan uster ride on dat big iron shovel, playin' lak hit wuz er stage coach an' dat Zan wuz de driver?" asked Aunt Tilda, who more than once dried her tear-stained eyes while Aunt Patience was talking. "You sho' did have to hold on mighty tight when Zan went er-gallopin' 'cross the kitchen flo', 'tendin' dat he wuz tryin' to git erway from de stage robbers an' not carin' what he runned over, an' how you'd fall off an' hurt yourself. Once in erwhile you an' Zan would load up de shovel wid sweet 'taters what Mammy Mary wuz er roastin' in de hot ashes, Zan 'tendin' lak de shovel wuz er steamboat comin' down de river wid er big load er freight, you actin' lak you wuz de pilot an' er whistlin' when you wanted de boat to land. No, indeed, honey, I ain't forgot how you two uster git dem tongs over dere, leanin' 'ginst de jam, an' when you wuzn't careful you'd raise er blood blister on yer fingers by gittin' 'em caught an' pinched when you'd shut em up; den Mammy Mary would kiss de little so' finger an' tie hit up wid turpentine an' sugar, whilst you wuz er tellin' her dat de ole man tongs, wid his long legs an' short neck an' shoulders, wuz er winkin' dat one eye of his'n at you. Yassum, dat's de truth; dem days de dog irons wuz piled up wid wood cut from de black jack an' white oak, wid er big hick'ry back log what would burn all night, an' de next mornin' de kitchen would be so nice an' warm dat you'd allus want Mammy Mary to let you have yer breakfast dere, sittin' in her lap in front of de fire, kase you uster lak to sit dere an' watch de blaze an' de sparks. Many is de time

dat I'se dun chunked up de fire on purpose fer to make hit sparkle, whilst you'd sit dere an' clap yer little han's an' laugh an' tell me dat you wanted to see some mo' sparks fly up de chimly. Den after you'd have yo' breakfast you'd come wid yer little white apron full er ches'nuts an' ask me to roast 'em fer you in front of de fire. Ef we'd furgit to cut de hulls, dey'd pop lak r pistol—den dere'd be er scatterin' of nuts an' hot ashes an' chillun. Has yer furgot when yer big brothers would come home from de college fer to spen' Christmus wid you all, an' how dey'd all gather 'roun' an' watch me an' Aunt Patience make animal cakes for you chillun?"

"I tell you, Miss Sammie, dis ole kitchen jes' seemed lak er Paradise in dem days, when you wuz all er livin' an' happy," said Aunt Patience, closing the oven door and resting her elbow on the arm of my rocker. "I does all I kin to make my chillun an' my gran'-chillun happy when Christmus time comes, kase I knows dat hit means more to 'em den any other time of de year, an' so I jes' turns 'em loose an' lets 'em do as dey please. Christmus don't come but once er year nohow, an' I b'lieve in lettin' de chillun, as well as de grown folks, have all de fun dey kin, long as dey don't meddle wid powder an' git hurt. Las' Christmus some of de chillun comed mighty nigh gittin' kilt, an' fer dat reason I don't 'low to let 'em git dere han's on no rale gunpowder ef I kin help it. Yassum, dat's as true as yer live, kase las' Christmus Caleb had some powder in de satchel what I made him out'n bedtickin', what he had hung so high dat he didn't think none of de chillun could reach hit. But Grover Clevelan' clumb up on de bedpos' an' stole de flask what had de powder in hit; den him an' er passel of de udder chillun went down to de new ground an' built er fire behin' er big stump. While Grover wuz er pourin' powder on de live coals, fer to see hit flash, de blaze runned up in de flask an' busted hit. I heard de 'sploshun clear up

here in de kitchen, an' when I got to whar de chillun wuz, Grover wuz er rollin' in de grass an' er hollerin' dat he dun burnt his eyes clean out'n his hade. Hit sho' did come mighty nigh bein' de truth, kase de whole side of his face wuz scorched an' burnt wid de powder, an' one eye was mos' put out. For more'n er month dat boy couldn't open dat eye, let erlone seein' out'n hit, an' his eyebrows an' eyelashes ain't growed back yit.

"I certainly does hate to spile dere fun, but dis year I 'lows to watch 'em an' see dat dey don't get into no mischief, kase chillun ain't got no use er handlin' powder nohow. Ef we had er—come here, Miss Sammie, an' see Marse John out yonder, flxin' to take er picture of Baby Clinton in de baby buggy. I tell you, honey, he's plumb foolish 'bout dat chile, an' ef he's taken dat baby's picture once in de las' week, he's taken fifty of 'em. Yassum, dat's so; hit's bin er long time sence Marse John wuz on Briers, an' de fust day he wuz here he gits his cam'ra an' goes out by Aunt Tilda's cabin, fer to take er picture of er lot er ole turkey buzzards roostin' in er tree. When I ask him what he wanted wid er picture lak dat, de tears comed in his eyes when he told me dat he'd bin out on de plains fer more'n twenty years, 'mongst de cowboys an' Injuns, an' he 'lowed dem ole turkey buzzards wuz de fust ones dat he'd seen sence he lef' de South. De next day, when he showed me de picture what he took, he said dat he wuz er gwine to send hit to 'Rattlesnake Pete' an' tell him dat dey wuz wild turkeys, but I reckon he'll know dat no wild turkeys wouldn't 'low him to git dat close to 'em."

It was, indeed, a merry party that returned from the swamps about 2 o'clock that afternoon, the darkies having two big wagons piled high with fragrant greenery. Nowhere else is Christmas decoration such an easy, inexpensive thing as in the dear old Southland, where can be found whole forests of pine and cedar, holly and mistletoe, all to be had simply for the gathering.

"I'se got er whole barrel full of pecans, lots of hick'ry nuts an' walnuts, an' mos' er cotton basket full of ripe 'simmons," remarked Aunt Caroline, who was assisting Aunt Patience in cutting the animal cakes, while Lucetta, Parralee and Adaline were placing them in broad, flat pans, baking them a nice golden brown before putting them in the wooden trays to cool and become crisp and brittle. Among them were some cut in the shape of rabbits, others like cows, sheep, horses and miniature dolls, or "little men an' women," as the pick-aninnies styled them.

"I tell you, Miss Sammie, dese chillun sho' will have er feast to-morrow, when we sets dis big tray of cakes an' all dem nuts an' 'simmons out under de trees an' we tells 'em dey kin hep derselves," remarked Aunt Patience, as she watched a little darkey creep under the table and pick up a piece of cake dough that had fallen on the floor.

"What are you doing now—picking another turkey?" I asked, as I walked over to where Aunt Tilda was sitting in front of the big, open fireplace.

"No, indeed, honey; I'se jes' 'tendin' to dese here turkey wings whilst dey am er dryin'," she answered, as she arose and procured a rocker for me. "You see, honey, dey won't keep dere shape less'n I has heavy smoothin' irons on 'em an' keeps 'em spreaded out till dey gits sot an' purty nigh dry. I'se got eight now, 'sides dese here two turkey tails, what's spread out jes' lak dey is when Mister Gobbler am er struttin'. Yassum, dey makes better fans den de wings, kase dey's broader an' makes mo' breeze, an' when dey gits good an' dry I'se gwine to ask Miss Genie to give me some of dat red calico, what wuz lef' over from bordering dat new quilt, to bind de bone en's wid; den I'll make er loop on each one, for to hang 'em on de arm, so we won't have to tote 'em in our han's when we goes to church. I don't 'low dat dey'll look nice as dese sto' boughten fans lak Miss Genie buys when she

goes to Natchez, but when fly time comes an' hit commences to git real warm, dey sho' will make er breeze an' cool er pusson off quick, an' dere ain't nothin' what kin beat 'em when de chuch am crowded with niggers, all er-shoutin' an' er-sweatin' at de same time."

"You Christopher Napoleon!" shouted Aunt Patience, "ef you don't stop er-hittin' dat chile in de face wid dat bunch of gobbler whiskers, tryin' to put his eyes out, I'se er gwine to 'port you to Marse Frank an' tell him not to give you no firecrackers. Ef you don't 'have yerself, Santa Claus ain't er gwine to fetch you nothin' but er five-cent bag er candy an' er bundle of switches, an' he won't even leave you de candy ef I tells him what er mean boy you is. Make haste, boy, an' shoo dat baby back befo' he crawls out'n de door! Ef you don't stop er-fillin' yer mouth full er dat dough, an' watch dat chile, I'se er gwine to lock you up in de smokehouse till after New Year's, now you mind what I tells you."

For a long time I sat chatting pleasantly with Aunt Tilda, watching her as she turned and dried the turkey wings, laughing heartily at her quaint way of telling how much things had changed "sence befo' de war."

"I don't know how to 'count fer hit," she said, "but befo' de war, when yer ma uster raise more'n er hundred turkeys ev'ry summer, de gobblers uster weigh 'tween thirty-five an' forty pounds when dey wuz ready to kill, but dey don't weigh dat much now. Yassum, dey sho' wuz monsters, an' de wings---why honey, when dey's spread out dey makes more of er breeze den dat 'lectric fan what Marse Frank wuz er tellin' me dat he's got in his office in Cairo. I heard Marse John tellin' Aunt Patience dat turkeys wuz er sellin' for 30 cents er pound out whar he's bin, but nobody 'round here ain't er gwine to pay more'n six bits fer er turkey, an' dey's got to be big ones to fetch dat much. De ones what---come in here, Zeke, an' let Miss Sammie see how tall you's growed. Yassum, dat's my gran'son, what I told

you wuz er comin' down from Memphis. He sho' did fetch me er lot er nice things fer Christmus, an' his wife brung me er big, warm shawl dat's jes' what I needs to fling 'round my shoulders when I gits up dese chilly mornin's."

"Is dis de same Miss Sammie I uster see on Briers, wearin' short dresses an' allus up to some mischief?" asked Zeke, as he stood by the side of Aunt Tilda's chair, his hand resting affectionately on her stooped shoulders. "You sho' has changed sence I las' saw you, an' I never would er 'knowed you ef I had er seed you in Memphis. Yassum, I allus makes hit er rule to come an' see Granny ev'ry Christmus, an' dis time I fetched my wife erlong. De boss at de sto' whar I wucks didn't want to let me off till Christmus mornin', but when I told him 'bout Granny an' how she had raised me, an' dat she wuz mos' 90 years old now, he told me to go 'long an' have er good time. I'se bin er-tryin' fer de las' two years to git Granny to go to Memphis an' stay dere er month er so an' den come back to Briers, but she 'lows dat hit's too big er place for her an' dat she'd git los' befo' she wuz dere er day."

"You jes' oughter see de big sack full er firewucks dat Zeke brung for de chillun," interrupted Aunt Tilda, laughing and chuckling gleefully. "He fetched er gunnysack full er nothin' but firecrackers an' dese here spinnin' wheels what sizzles an' makes er lot er fuss, but I sho' does lak to watch dem skyrockets what goes clear up to de clouds an' den busts, scatterin' dem lovely sparks of different colors, kase dey 'minds me of de time when de stars fell. Yassum, I sho' does 'member dat time, when ole missus an' all de niggers fell down on dere knees an' prayed loud as dey could, beggin' de Lawd to save 'em, kase dey thought dat de worl' wuz er-comin' to er end. I tell you, Miss Sammie, I don't want to see nothin' mo' lak dat, an' I don't reckon I ever will till de great judgment day comes an' Marse Gabriel blows his trumpet an' dese old dry bones will rise ergin."

When the preparations for the Christmas feast were finally completed, the servants retired to their quarters, not to sleep, however, but to make merry the whole night. Soon after it became dark, numerous bonfires were lighted at intervals between the cabins, while the darkies, old and young, gathered around them, all in their best clothing, some of the women dressed in bright red, while others appeared in gay stripes and plaids, wearing gaudy beads around their necks and bright-colored ribbon bows on their heads. Not to the small boy alone, but to the negro of all ages, was it a time for general rejoicing. From their snug log cabins, made bright by the burning of pine knots piled high in the open fireplaces, came the sounds of laughter and shuffling and tramping of feet, mingled with the merry strains of the violin and banjo, while on the doorsteps, in scanty apparel and barefooted, sat a number of the little pickaninnies munching Christmas sweets, blissfully content and watching with great delight their elders make merry.

Thus the time passed until midnight, when those who had fallen asleep were awakened by the unearthly din of horns, the rattling of cow-bells and the beating of tin-pans. The shouts of the men and boys, together with the blare of trumpets and the clanging of bells, made the night one long to be remembered by those who heard it. Around and around the cabins the darkies marched, and well the dwellers therein knew what it meant. It was to bring the glad tidings that Christmas was at hand, and that a score or more of the lively, adventurous darkies on the plantation were giving them an old-fashioned serenade. The good wife got up and donned the clothing which had scarcely been abandoned for the night, getting out huge loaves of ginger bread and pitchers and jugs filled with persimmon beer, as well as large trays of roasted chestnuts, peanuts and popcorn.

While these preparations were being made, the noise

grew more and more intense, until a friendly light streamed through the cabin door, as it was thrown wide open and the crowd invited in. It was a picturesque and formidable looking group, for each and every one wore masks, some of which were exceedingly comical, while others had simply cut eyeholes in their red bandanas, a number having used the paint brush so liberally that they resembled flat-nosed Indians. After partaking of the refreshments, the happy serenaders wished their host and hostess a Merry Christmas, then hurried away to the next cabin, where the same performance was repeated.

Woe is the darkey who remains in bed and fails to show his face to his Christmas eve serenaders. He may, in that case, on Christmas morning, find his front gate half a mile or more from his cabin, in the middle of the big road, or the wheels of his wagon swinging from the top branches of a tall post oak or black jack tree. In this manner passed the night before Christmas, and the dawn brings the gladdest day of the year. A sort of sacred atmosphere seems to pervade it; the sunshine has a delicious golden quality and by a rare chance, perhaps, there is an exhilarating frosty tinge to the air, but nothing more of that nature to tell that this gayest time comes during the winter king's reign.

The morning passed away in Christmas jollity—then came the dinner, for a plantation Christmas dinner is indeed a feast fit for the gods. The long table, capable of seating thirty or more, fairly groans 'neath its weight of good things, consisting of well-roasted turkeys, their breasts fairly bulging out with rich oyster dressing; in the center of the table is a plump, half-grown pig, roasted whole, stuffed with nut dressing, holding a big, red apple in its mouth and surrounded by a pyramid of richly-browned sweet yellow yam potatoes for which the Briers plantation is noted. There were also served all kinds of vegetables, fruits and nuts, for they have only to visit their own cellar,

dairy, smokehouse, orchard and garden to prepare a meal fit to serve a king. After these courses were served, the servants cleared the table, bringing in bowls of ambrosia, boiled custard, sillabub and old-fashioned pound cake like our grandmothers used to make, which when sliced resembled bars of gold, and last, but not least, was the mound of cranberries and a huge plum pudding.

It was indeed a merry party that was seated around the bountifully spread banquet table. After much jesting and laughter, they at last finished the meal, after which it is a wonder that all festivities did not cease from sheer inability of the participants to exert themselves further.

Christmas night came on with its brilliancy and noise, the older of the young people getting together at some designated cabin to dance and keep time to the gay music, while the younger ones played games by the light of the bonfires, watching the skyrockets, Roman candles and other fireworks, while the tiny pickaninies amused themselves by shooting firecrackers which were lighted for them by their elders. Thus is Christmas celebated on a Mississippi plantation.



Thanksgiving in Dixieland

Standing 'neath the silver-leaved poplars that lined the board walk leading to the old-fashioned garden on the Briers plantation, I could scarcely realize that the summer had bidden us farewell and gone her way along the dim-lighted path leading to the shadowy past. From the open kitchen windows near where I stood, delicious billows of warm air gushed forth, scenting the soft November breeze with the odor of onions, sage and thyme, the appetizing fragrance of crisping fat and the caramel perfume of baking sweet potatoes. On the broad window sill I noticed two or three rows of rich pumpkin pies, immense loaves of spongy gingerbread and a huge mold of cranberries, all cooling for the morrow's Thanksgiving feast. The big yard was sweet and spicy with the chrysanthemums, tansy, fennel, mint and sweet basil, over all of which lazily droned a few bees that had ventured from their hives under the chinaberry trees, lured outside by the midday warmth of the mellow sunshine and fragrant breeze. A few sturdy prince feathers lifted their crimson heads, bowing gayly to the stately hollyhocks that bordered the lower edge of the yard. Lucetta, the housemaid, with a song on her lips, was lustily wielding the broom and duster, making the house clean and sweet from cellar to garret, while a dozen or more of the plantation pickaninnies, under the watchful eye of Uncle Jack, were busily engaged in raking up and burning the crimson and yellow autumn leaves which were fast leaving the stately old oaks bare and bleak. All were merry and frolicsome in anticipation of the good things they would have at the morrow's feast, so much so that many times Uncle Jack admonished them to "'have yerselves an' clean erway dem leaves off'n de lawn, an' stop foolin' de time erway."

"Come in de kitchen—ain't you lonesome out dere, honey?" remarked Aunt Patience, the cook, upon seeing me in the yard. "I thought maybe you'd lak to come in de kitchen an' watch Aunt Mary, Sis' Calline an' me cookin' all de good things what we'se 'parin' for de company what's er comin' on de Betsy tomorrow fer to spen' Thanksgiving wid Marse Frank. Lawdy, honey, don't ax me who all's er comin', kase I can't begin to tell you; but I heard Miss Genie say dat we could count fer sure on Cap'n Rumble an' his three daughters, Mister Will Dicks an' his wife an' chillun, Marse Albert's old friend, Mister Pardee; Governor Chamberlain, an' I can't begin to tell you who all else. I reckon dat de kin folks from New Orleans is er comin' too, but I'se dun 'pared for 'em all, an' ef I do says hit myself, dere won't be no finer dinner set on no table in Mississippi den'll be found right here on old Briers', in de dinin'-room.

"You niggers hurry an' polish up dat silver till you kin see yer black, shiny faces in hit, an' stop er fussin' over who's er gwine ter sop dis cake pan when I rakes de batter out'n hit," continued Aunt Patience, wiping her hands on the big gingham apron that covered her white skirt. "Ef you chillun don't 'have yerselves, I ain't er gwine to let nary one of you sop dis pan, now you hear what I say. Parralee, you take dat big pan er potlicker an' break up er pone er cornbread in hit, an' take out to dem chillun what's bin er rakin' up leaves sence sun up dis mornin'. Here, take 'em dis big plate er sweet 'taters, too, kase I specks dem niggers is mos' starved. Make haste, now, chile, an' run 'long wid hit while hit's hot, den dey kin wuck better after dey gets filled up.

"Yes, honey, as I wuz er sayin', dere won't be no finer dinner in de land den de one we'se er gwine to have, kase I'se got de fattest kind er turkeys, de juciest mince pies, an' de nicest sweet apple cider an' 'simmon beer, an' sweet peach pickles, an' chow-chow, all made



"You niggers hurry an' polish up dat silver till you can see your black, shiny faces in hit."

right here on Briers. What's dat you'se er sayin' 'bout de pure food law? No, indeed, honey, we ain't bothered 'bout no food laws, kase Marse Frank has ev'rything dat we eats raised right here under his eyes, an' he knows what he's eatin', an' yer don't ketch him 'er eatin' at no hotel, less'n he's travelin' somewhere. Ef he—You Christopher Napoleon, ef you don't stop er chunkin' dat rooster an' git to wuck, I'se gwine to blister dat black hide of yourn wid er boa'd, now you hear what I said, don't yer? Hit jes' seems lak de more wuck dere is to do, de more anxious you is fer to be er foolin' yer time erway, chunkin' dat rooster or sicin' de dogs on Miss Genie's calf. Look yonder—dere's dat lazy Grover Cleveland er sittin' on de fence, chawin' sugar cane, lak dere warn't nothin' fer him to do. Never mind, boy; Uncle Jack'll see you 'rectly an' make you come down off'n dat perch, now you mind what I say."

"Here, honey, I'se brung you er glass er 'simmon beer an' er slice of ginger-bread," said Aunt Mary, placing a plate before me on the clean, uncovered kitchen table. "No'am, I ain't furgot how you uster lak hit, an' I 'lows dat yer taste ain't changed. Me an' Aunt Patience made dis beer, an' I knows dat you'll lak hit. Yassum, we had 'Lias fetch us er big cotton basket full of nice, ripe 'simmons, an' den we baked er whole lot er little stringy sweet 'taters what we could bake clear through; den we got er big, clean barrel an' put down er layer of de hard baked 'taters; den er layer of 'simmons, till we dun filled de barrel two-thirds full; den we poured clear spring water on hit till de barrel wuz full. After dat we tied er thick cloth over de top of de barrel, makin' hit air tight, an' left hit to ferment an' wuck itself into beer. We knowed dat hit would be ready fer Thanksgivin', kase we makes er barrel or two of it ev'ry year, an' we knows jes' how long hit'll take befo' it's fitten to drink. I'se mighty glad dat you laks hit, honey, kase you uster be powerful fond of hit when you wuz er growin' up."

"Aren't you getting rather old to be doing this kind of work without glasses?" I asked Aunt Tilda, who was seated in an old wooden rocker in one corner of the kitchen, cutting carpet rags and sewing them together, winding them into huge balls, to be woven later into a carpet.

"Why, la, honey, I ain't never had er pair of specks on my eyes in my born days," she answered. "No'am, I don't need no specks, kase I allus gits some of de chillun, or de women what's got good eyes, to thread my needle for me, an' den I gits 'long fine. Yassum, I'se er gwine to finish dis carpet in time fer Christmus, kase my gran'son an' his wife is er comin' down from Memphis, fer to spend Christmus wid me, an' I'se er gwine to have de cabin er shinin' wid er new rag carpet. You see, honey, I took Zeke when his mother died, when he wuz jes' er week old, an' raised him, an' he's allus said dat he wuz er gwine to pay me fer his raisin', ef he could do so an' I lived long 'nough. Las' Christmus he brung me er woolen cloak what covers me all over, 'sides er woolen shawl an' er scarf fer to wear over my hade, an' ev'ry Christmus he sen's me er heap er nice things. You see, Miss Sammie, he's de porter in er big sto' in Memphis, an' de head porter at dat, an' dey pays him er big salary. His wife takes in washin' an' dey both makes money, an' dat's why dey ain't stingy wid me. Dey's both bin after me fer to live wid 'em, but, la, chile, I'd be jes' lak er fish out'n de water in er big place lak dey say Memphis is. No'am, I ain't never sot foot off'n dis here plantashun in nigh on to sixty years, an' ef de good Lawd so wills, I'se er gwin to stay an' be buried right over yonder under dat sycamo' tree whar Jackson, my ole man, has bin er restin' for more'n twenty years. How ole am I? Well, honey, I ain't sho' about my age, but I reckon dat I'se about ninety years old, kase my young missus tole me dat I wuz fifty de year after de surrender, an' dat would make me mighty high on to ninety, wouldn't hit?"

Stopping in the midst of her work, the faithful old servant rested her black, hardened hands on her lap and began crooning an old favorite song:

"I'll soon be jined to my chillun,

When de judgment day comes on;

For Gawd'll be good to po' old Tilda,

When Gabriel is er blowin' his ho'n."

After singing for a few minutes, she looked up and I could see that the tears were not far away.

"Yassum, I'se dun outlived all twelve of my chillun," she continued, "an' I'se seen many of my gran'-chillun an' greatgran'-chillun laid out yonder in de ole plantashun graveyard, but I reckon dat hit won't be long now till de folks lays my po' ole bones out dar wid de res'."

"Dar you go ergin, Aunt Tilda, talkin' 'bout dyin', when you knows dat you's good fer to live to be er hundred, an' may be more'n dat," said Aunt Patience. "Marse Frank has told you dat he heard dat yo' mother lived fer to be er hundred an' ten, an' why shouldn't you do de same? You's bin er talkin' 'bout dyin' for de las' twenty years, an' you ain't gone yit. I kin 'member de time, all of fifteen years ergo, when you bought er pair of white stockin's wid de Christmus money what Marse Frank gin you, sayin' dat you wuz er gwine to lay 'em erway fer to be laid out an' buried in, an' I 'lows dat dem stockin's is dun et up by de moths by dis time."

"No, dem stockin's wuzn't et up by de moths," interrupted Aunt Tilda, "for when po' Julia Jenkins died las' year, wid hardly er stitch of clothes to her back an' leavin' nothin' but er triffin', no 'count husband an' er whole passel of half-clothed chillun, I took dem stockin's over to her cabin an' put 'em on her, an' dey wuzn't moth-eaten, either. Dey wuz jes' as nice as dey wuz de day I bought 'em from dat ole peddler what comed 'long here wid his pack on his back."

Rocking back and forth, Aunt Tilda again commenced to sing, in her high-pitched treble:

"I don't want no money; all I wants is love;
Kase I draws my rations from erbove."

"Yassum, I sho' does feel tired an' tuckered out," remarked Aunt Patience, taking a seat on the edge of the woodbox. "I'se got mos' ev'rything done what I kin do today, an' I'se bin as busy as er bee sence daylight dis mornin'. I'se got all my pumpkin pies an' cookies baked, an' ev'rything else 'pared dat I kin fix, so's to have 'em ready to put in de oven in de mornin'. After dat's dun, I won't have nothin' much to do but to fix de stuffin', cook er few vegetables an' do er few other little things, such as makin' de ambrosia an' de biled custard, an' by twelve o'clock tomorrow you'll see de fines' dinner in de lan', all er settin' on de table in de dinin'-room, ready fer de company."

I was aroused bright and early the next morning by the hurry and bustle of the house servants, as they moved rapidly about, here, there, everywhere. Before I left my room, I could hear 'Lias talking to Lucetta, telling her that she had forgotten to put the ribbon bows on the fresh-laundered curtains in the parlor.

"Dat's true, 'Lias, I dun furgot 'em. My hade is sure turned wrong side out dis mornin', wid all dis here fixin' an' stewin' 'round, gittin' ready for de Thanksgiving dinner," she exclaimed.

About ten o'clock, Uncle Jack appeared on the front porch, going to the end and standing upon the railing, that he might get a better view of the river.

"I sho'ly did hear de whistle of de Betsy erwhile ergo," he said, shading his eyes with his hand. "She ain't never bin er gittin' here befo' 'leven or twelve o'clock, an' sometimes hit's way late in de afternoon, but dat sho' wuz her whistle."

"Here comes de Betsy, Miss Sammie—she's er-comin'!" shouted one of the little pickaninnies, ten minutes later, bounding into the middle of the kitchen.

"For de Lawd sake! I wuzn't lookin' fer de Betsy till 'bout noon," exclaimed Aunt Patience, hastening to the kitchen window. "I reckon I'll git Aunt Tilda to stay here an' watch ev'rything, whilst I goes down to de landin' an' see who gits off'n de boat."

For the next ten minutes there were flying feet, as the darkies hurriedly put on their best clothing, one and all heading for the landing, to assist in extending a welcome to the visitors and to "tote" any baggage they might have.

When the Betsy Ann came into view from around the drooping willows in the bend, and blew her shrill whistle, the darkies sent up a ringing cheer, even the little pickanninnies forgetting for the time being their mud balls and joining in the welcome.

"I see Miss Louise an' Miss Evah an' dere ma, comin' down de stairway," shouted Lucetta, edging her way to the front of the crowd and clapping her hands with delight. "I wonder ef Miss Louise furgot to bring dem blue chany beads what she said she'd bring me when she comed ergin. Yas, dat's Miss Evah, wavin' to Marse Frank. I hope she didn't furgit dat red ribbon what she promised me, fer to pin in my hair. Howdy do, Miss Louise! Howdy do, Miss Evah! Don't you give dat package to none of de udder niggers, kase I wants to tote it to de house myself."

"Ah, ha! Dar's Marse Jeems! De las' time he wuz here I gin him er dollar an' asked him fer to bring me one of dem red checked vests lak de city niggers am er-wearin!" cried a young negro boy, who was just beginning to court the dusky lassies on the plantation.

"I wonder ef dat man wid de plug hat is er gwine to git off here?" questioned one of the darkies.

"Why, sho'! Don't you know who dat is? Dat's Governor Chamberlain, what comed all de way down here from Oregon," answered Aunt Mary. "'Cou'se he's gwine to git off—didn't you hear Miss Genie tell us er week ergo dat Marse Frank got er letter from

him, an' dat he wuz er-comin' to spen' Thanksgivin' on Briers? I knowed de Governor when he wuzn't nothin' but er little bit of er baby, an he wuz dat smart when he wuz er goin' to school in Natchez dat mos' ev'rybody 'lowed dat he'd be President of de United States some day."

It was indeed a merry party that stood on the river bank and watched the Betsy Ann back out into the stream, the pilot more than once tooting the whistle in acknowledgment of the cheering and shouting from whites and blacks alike. When the boat turned and was well under way, the entire party proceeded on foot to the house, Governor Chamberlain and the host walking arm in arm and leading the gay procession, in whose wake came the darkies, to the number of 300, some laughing, others singing, but all in their usual happy mood.

At 1 o'clock the guests assembled in the parlor and formed the grand march for the dining-room. Upon entering the room, which was profusely decorated with crimson autumn foliage, great feathery sprays of yellow golden rod and other fragrant flowers, festooned with bright-colored ribbons, they were greeted by the voices of an impromptu quartet singing, "Dixie."

For more than a month 'Lias, the houseman, had kept in training a goodly number of the darkies who were musically inclined, nearly all of whom possessed violins, guitars, mandolins, trombones or banjos. Among the number were a few who were so well versed in the picking of the banjo that they could have earned good salaries on the vaudeville stage. While the guests were enjoying the spread prepared by the well-trained and faithful hands of the old household servants, this improvised orchestra, stationed behind a great bank of yellow, red and white chrysanthemums, dispensed melodies, interspersed at frequent intervals with familiar plantation songs.

After partaking of the feast the guests scattered

about the roomy old plantation house and grounds, some out under the shady live oaks, all covered with their autumn dress of clinging crimson ivy, some occupying comfortable rockers on the broad verandas, while a few of the gentlemen adjourned to the host's private den to enjoy their cigars.

I had entered the parlor and was enjoying the music drawn from the old-fashioned square piano, whose tone seemed to be mellowed instead of lessened by the many years of usage, when I noticed Aunt Patience motioning for me. Proceeding to the kitchen with her, she assailed me with numerous questions, asking:

"Did de Governor lak de dinner, honey? Didn't I tell you dat I wuz er gwine to set de fines' dinner what wuz ever served on dis plantashun? I knowed dat he'd lak dat turkey, kase dem birds has bin in de pens fer nigh onto three weeks an' 'Lias er stuffin' 'em wid all dey could eat; den I had de breas's er stickin' out wid de oyster dressin', an' ef I does say hit, dey couldn't er bin cooked no nicer den dey wuz. Yassum, dere's plenty for all de colored folks to have dere share, an' dere ain't nothin' dat er nigger laks better'n turkey, less'n hit's er fat 'possum, er swimmin' in rich gravy, wid er lot er sweet yaller yams. From de way dat dey all laughed an' talked whilst dey wuz at de table I knowed dat dey wuz enjoyin' dereselves."

Who could not be happy, living on this old plantation, whose fields are the richest and most fertile to be found throughout all our beautiful Southland, with its restful, charming, healthful climate? I thought it no wonder that the darkeys always seemed happy and contented, going about their work with song and merry laughter, for some are there to-day who have never gone out of sight of the cabin homes in which they were born.

Going out on the broad veranda, I looked across the highway to the fern-decked levee, with here and there a giant oak, some draped with wild grapes, some with

flaming ivy or Virginia creeper, while at its edge flowed the muddy, turbulent old Mississippi river, bordered with a few sycamores, now and then a stately elm, or a clump of low, bending willows. Above and beyond this beautiful scene was the sunbrightened blue sky, bending over all like a benediction.



The Trials of a Darky Schoolma'am

"You Christopher Napoleon!" shouted Aunt Patience, standing in the door of the kitchen on the Briers plantation, "ef you an' dat Grover Clevelan' don't stop er tormentin' dat po' old half starved, mangy, flea-bitten dog, an' go on to school, I'se er gwine to wear you out wid dis broom handle, now you hear me, don't you? You seed me set dat pan out dere, so dat dog could git er drink, an' dere you's gone an' upset hit jes' fer pure meanness. How'd you lak to be treated dat way, ef you wuz er dog?"

Turning to me, Aunt Patience said: "Dat po' dog acts lak he ain't had nothin' to eat sence las' Christmus, and' I reckon de only vittels dat he gits is what he steals from udder people's dogs an' cats."

"You Christopher Napoleon!" again shouted Aunt Patience, "ef you don't come down out'n dat tree an' go on to school, an' quit fillin' yo' pockets wid dem chaneyberries, I'll take dis here buggy whip an' wear hit out on yo' back, you young scamp! You'd better come down out'n dat tree, kase ef Marse Albert ketches you up dere, breakin' de limbs off, you won't look lak de same boy when he gits through wid you. Jes' look at dem new books what yer ma bought for you las' week, lyin' dere in dat wet grass. Ef you two niggers ain't ernuff to drive er pusson plumb 'stracted, I don't know who is."

"I didn't know that they had a colored school on the plantation since the teacher quit a month or so ago," I remarked, as Aunt Patience came up the steps.

"Yassum," she replied, watching the pickaninnies as they walked slowly toward the big gate, "dey's

got ernudder teacher an' de school opened up las' Chewsday. De teacher what dey had las' fall got mad an' went back to New Orleans whar she comed from, but dey's hired ernudder one on trial."

"The other teacher seemed to be all right—what was the trouble with her?"

"Me an' Sis' Calline 'lowed dat she wuz er mighty good teacher, but you see, Miss Sammie, niggers ain't lak white folks, an' dey never will be. Dat udder teacher wuz jes' as nice as she could be, an' she dun more'n any udder one we'se had to learn de chillun some manners, as well as things out'n de books, but some of de niggers 'round here thought dey knowed more 'bout how to run de school den de teacher did."

"Do you think the one they have now will get along any better?"

"I don't reckon she'll stay more'n er week or so, kase Sis' Lucy went over to de school house yistiddy an' 'gun to meddle wid her, an' hit won't take long to run her off ef Sis' Lucy talks 'bout her lak she did wid de udder one what we had. For my part, I don't care ef de school closes down altogether, kase I don't b'lieve in eddycatin' er nigger nohow. I b'lieves as Marse Albert do, dat er nigger's made to wuck, an' de minute you commences to eddycate 'em, you's spilin' 'em fer field han's. Look at dat nasty Toby Conger, what comed down here from Natchez, claimin' dat he'd bin to college an' knowed more'n all de white folks in Mississippi put together, an' see what happened to him befo' he'd bin here er week."

"Do you mean that stylish-looking fellow that got off the Betsy a week ago yesterday?"

"Dat's de one—dat's him. All he wuz good fer wuz to lay 'round in de cabins, sparkin' de young gals when dere parents wuz er wuckin' in de fields, an' teachin' de chillun how to shoot craps, an' we wuz all mighty glad when de sheriff comed erlong an' took him back

to Natchez an' locked him up in de jail fer stealin' er woman's pocketbook."

"Perhaps they caught the wrong man," I suggested.

"No'am dey didn't," answered Aunt Patience, "kase de sheriff searched him de minute he laid han's on him, right befo' Caleb an' er lot of de field han's, an' dere wuz de woman's pocketbook an' two of de rings what wuz in hit when he snatched hit erway from her. Maybe I'se wrong, but I 'lows dat hit'll be er long time befo' dat nigger's eddycashun will git him outside dat jail."

"Tell me some more about the trouble with the teacher—what appears to be the matter with the one they have now?"

"Well, Lucetta told me dat Sis' Lucy went over to de school house yistiddy an' 'gun to meddle wid her, tellin' her how she should manage de chillun, an' how to learn 'em, but—dat's her comin' through de big gate now."

"Good mornin', Miss Sammie! Mornin', Aunt Patience! How's Marse Albert's foot? Is he able to walk on hit dis mornin'?" questioned Lucy, as she entered the kitchen and handed Aunt Patience a quart bottle filled with turpentine. "One of my chillun told me yistiddy dat Marse Albert wuz er havin' trouble wid his foot ergin, so I 'lowed I'd drop in on my way to de school house an' leave dis here bottle of turpentine, kase hit sho' will take de swellin' out'n de leg ef he'll rub hit in good an' hard."

"Are you teaching over at the school house now?" I asked.

"No'am, I ain't teachin'," she replied, taking a chair that Aunt Tilda offered her, "but I goes over dere once in er while, to see de teacher 'bout my two boys an' my gal. I tell you, Miss Sammie, I don't see er bit er sense in sendin' chillun to dat school, kase dey ain't er learnin' er thing what's doin' 'em good, but my old

man 'lows dat hit's better to send 'em an' let 'em pick up what dey kin, ruther than havin' 'em 'round de house, playin' in de mud an' chasin' de chickens 'round de back yard. Yassum, dat's de Gawd's truth, kase dey might as well be at home, for all dey's learnin' dere. Dat teacher lets 'em play more'n half de time anyhow, 'stead er teachin' 'em something, an when dey ought to be er studyin' dere lessons, she's showin' 'em how to put on airs an' how to part dere hair on de side. She sent my boy, Fred Douglas, home yistiddy, wid er note, tellin' me dat I should gin him er clean handkerchief ev'ry mornin', an' not be er teachin' him to wipe his nose on de sleeve of his coat, an' dat's what I'se er gwine over dere fer to see her 'bout now. We'se payin' dat teacher thirty dollars er month for teachin' fo' or five hours ev'ry day, 'ceptin' on Saturdays an' Sundays, an' here I is, wuckin' from mornin' till night an' gittin' nothin' but de vittels I eats an de few rags what I has on my back. What I wants her to do is to take my boys an' learn 'em dere A B C's, jes' lak I wuz taught, an' not be er tryin' to run 'em through de blue-back speller when dey don't know one letter from ernudder.

"Ernudder thing she did— she sent word by Salina dat she wanted me to buy her ernudder reader, so she could go in de class wid de udder big gals, but I ain't er gwine to buy narry nuther book for her till she learns what's in de one she's got. I'se already bought dat gal two new readers sence school opened, an' dat's enuff. I knows what dat teacher's up to—she's sellin' dem books an' makes er profit on ev'ry one she kin git de chillun to buy, dat's what she's er doin'. She's de wust——"

"Come here to de do', Miss Sammie, an' watch Marse John er fixin' to take dat chile's fotygraf on dat dunkey's back," interrupted Aunt Tilda, pulling at my sleeve. "Ef dat chile falls off dere sho' will be er fun'rel 'round here, kase dat dunkey's prickin' his ears



"Dey might as well be at home."

back now, an' ef he takes er notion to kick, dere ain't nothin' dat'll stop him, not even er stone wall. I never seed such er man as Marse John is fer takin' pictures, an' ef he pints dat cam'ra of his'n at you he'll git you ef you's on de udder side of de river."

"When I uster go to school," continued Lucy, taking a couple of cookies out of the pan that Aunt Patience passed to her, "we'd leave de house 'rectly after sun up, an' we never got back home till hit wuz most dark, an' we never had no classes but de one in spellin'. What me an' Sis' Polly an' Sis' Jenkins wants dat teacher to do is to learn our chillun how to figger an' cipher on de blackboa'd, an' not how to blow dere nose an' part dere hair on de side of de hade. When I wuz er talkin' wid her yistiddy, she 'lowed dat de oral 'rithmetic strengthens de reasonin' powers of de chile, but I up an' told her dat I wanted my chillun to learn how to count from one up to er hundred, an' how much dey'd git fer fo' dozen eggs ef dey wuz sellin' at ten cents er dozen—dat's all de 'rithmetic dey needs round here. Befo' I left she told me dat she wanted to put Salina in de grammar class next fall, but you knows, Miss Sammie, dat Salina ain't fitten to go in dat class for er year or two yit, now is she?

"When I went to school in Natchez we uster parse 'One I love, two I love,' an' 'He loves' an' 'she loves,' an' er lot er nonsense lak dat, but all dat foolishness ain't er gwine to do er chile no good on dis plantashun, is hit? De trouble wid dat teacher is dat she 'lows dem chillun to play too much, an' 'stead er teachin' 'em something what'll do 'em some good, she's fillin' dere heads wid er lot er stuff what ain't er gwine to do 'em er bit er good when dey goes out in de field to pick cotton."

"But didn't the teacher never allow you to play when you went to school?" I asked.

"Cou'se, we uster play er little at recess," replied



"We uster play er little at recess."

Lucy, "but de teacher didn't 'low us to play half de day, lak de chillun here does. I uster stay in most of de time at recess an' cipher on de blackboa'd wid lumps of chalk what we dug out'n de ground an' dried in de sun, an' de only class we had wuz de one in spellin'. I 'members how we uster lak to stan' up in er row an' spell, fallin' out soon as we missed er word, an' hit wuz mighty seldom dat you could ketch us jumpin' de rope an' playin'."

"You are one of the directors of the school here, are you not?"

"No'm, I ain't on de boa'd, but I knows er whole lot more'n dem what is. My old man b'longs on de boa'd, but he don't hardly ever find fault wid de teacher, kase she's er woman, an' ernudder reason is dat he don't know nothin' hisself an' can't tell when de chillun misses er word an' when dey don't. I don't lak to say hit, kase he's my husband, but he can't figger out how much money he'd git for er bale of cotton at 10 cents er pound, an' yet he's on de boa'd wid de rest of 'em. Well, hit's gittin' late, so I mus' be er goin'. Aunt Patience, you tell Marse Albert dat he must use lots of dat turpentine an' rub hit in hard, an' ef he wants some more I'll fetch hit over to him. I'se er gwine over an' see dat teacher an' tell her dat ef she sends me any mo' notes 'bout my chillun wipin' dere nose on dere coat sleeve, an' wantin' me to buy mo' books for 'em, dat she'd better close up de school an' go back to Natchez, kase she can't 'suade me to buy no mo' books till my chillun learns what's in de ones dey's got."

As soon as Lucy took her departure, Aunt Patience looked first at me and then at Aunt Tilda, laughing heartily.

"Dat nigger's allus talkin' 'bout how much she knows, but she ain't got no mo' eddycashun den er mule," she remarked, looking out of the kitchen win-

dow, to make sure that Lucy was not within hearing distance. "She's one of dese here firecracker niggers, what's allus ready to 'splode de minute you touches er match to her, an' you never sees her less'n she got er chip on her shoulder, watchin' for somebody to knock hit off. I never says much to her, kase I knows dat she's allus cocked an' primed for er fuss, but hit would be er great deal better ef she'd stay at home an' quit runnin' 'round, tellin' everybody how much she knows an' how smart her chillun is. I don't care how soon dey breaks up de school, kase I'se er gwine to take my chillun an' my gran'chillun out'n dere befo' long, anyway. Dey ain't er learnin' er thing but meanness nohow, an' ev'ry day some of dem Pea Ridge niggers steals dere lunch, stoppin' at de branch an' makin' sweetened water out'n de 'lasses what I gives my chillun for dere dinner; den dey stands erround an' drinks hit, callin' hit wine. Some mornin's dey don't git to school till nigh dinner time, kase dey stops 'long de road an' plays, an' no longer'n yistiddy Christopher Napoleon comed home wid his shirt tore clean off'n his back. Hit looks to me lak dey don't do nothin' but fight an' tear up dere clothes an' burn de shoes off'n dere feet, an' de ones what kin chaw de most tobacco, an' spit de fire out de quickest, is looked upon as de best chile in dat school."

"How do you like the pictures you bought for the school?" I asked.

"Lawd, honey," answered Aunt Patience, raising both hands, "we ain't never sot eyes on dem pictures nor on de man sence he wuz here over two months ergo. Me an' Sis' Calline wuz talkin' 'bout dat scamp yistiddy, an' we sho' will make it hot fer him ef we ever lays hands on him."

"Didn't I tell you at de time dat you shouldn't give money lak dat to er man what you didn't knowed," remarked Aunt Tilda, stopping in the midst of her

work. "I put dat man down for er rascal de minute I laid eyes on him, an' when you borrowed dat fo' bits off'n me, I told you den dat would be de last you'd ever see f dat money, an' hit comed true, jes' lak I said hit would."

"Well, I ain't de only one what got taken in," explained Aunt Patience, "kase Miss Sammie gin him fo' bits, too, an' I reckon he mus' er got eight or ten dollars from de niggers right here on Briers. He had er lot er nice pictures in gold-mounted frames—one of George Washington, Abe Lincoln, Gin'ral Grant, an' ef I ain't mistaken he had one of President Rusyvelt—an' he wanted to put 'em in de school house an' only charge er dollar erpiece for 'em. He told us dat he'd send 'em down from Natchez on de next trip of de Betsy, an' dat's more'n two months ergo. Maybe he fell off'n de boat an' wuz drowned, but de pictures ain't never comed yit an'——"

"An' dey ain't never comin'," remarked Aunt Tilda, "kase dat man jes' took dat money an' went to some udder place, an' de chances is dat he's dun sold dem same pictures over an' over er dozen times."

"Perhaps he may have had to send East for them, and they'll come along after awhile," I suggested.

"No'am dey won't," answered Aunt Tilda, "kase dat man never had no 'tention of sendin' 'em in de fust place. Ef he ever—You Christopher Napoleon, ef you don't stop er chasin' dem ducks out'n dat pond, an' go to school lak Aunt Patience dun begged you, I'll take er switch off'n dat rosebush an' wear hit out on you, boy! No wonder dat teacher's allus sendin' notes to yo' ma, tellin' her dat you ain't at school more'n one or two days in er week, an' you er tellin' her dat you wuz sick an' laid up in bed. You black rascal, ef you stan's dere, rollin' dem eyes at me an' stickin' out yo' tongue, I'll throw er dipper of scaldin' hot water en you! Why don't you take dem books an' go to

school, 'stead er limpin' 'round here an' playin' hookey?"

"I can't go to school, kase I dun hurt my leg," answered Christopher Napoleon, rubbing his shin.

"How'd you hurt dat leg?" inquired Aunt Patience, coming to the door of the kitchen.

"I fell off'n er log an' skinned hit," replied the darkey, sulkily.

"No'm he didn't, granny," cried Grover Cleveland, "He skun dat leg whilst he wuz comin' down out'n dat chaneyberry tree, scrapin' hit on de nail what de clothes-line's tied to."

"You come in dis kitchen, boy, an' lemme see dat leg," exclaimed Aunt Patience, sternly.

"I ain't er goin' to do hit—I'se er gwine on home to my ma," answered the boy, defiantly, as he limped toward the back gate, where he met 'Lias.

"Ketch dat boy, 'Lias, an' fetch him here," shouted the old cook, determinedly.

Dropping the big basket he was carrying, 'Lias caught the darkey, and despite the pickaninny's vigorous efforts to loosen his hold, Christopher was dragged into the kitchen. A moment later he was thrown to the floor and held by 'Lias, while both Aunt Patience and Aunt Tilda administered a generous supply of turpentine to the affected limb, after which they bandaged it securely and saturated the clothes with an additional quantity of the never-failing plantation remedy. The instant the screaming little darky was released, he made a break for the door, bounding down the steps three at a time, followed closely by two or three of his companions. As Aunt Patience appeared at the door of the kitchen Christopher was seen to clear the back fence at a single bound, going like a streak through the cotton fields until he reached his mother's cabin.

"He, he, he!" chuckled 'Lias. "Dat boy forgot to

limp when he felt dat turpentine er burnin' his leg, but maybe hit'll take some of de meanness out'n him, ef hit don't do nothin' else."

"Dat's what he gits fer not mindin' what I tells him," cried Aunt Patience, putting the bottle of turpentine back on the shelf, "kase I dun told him three or fo' times to keep out'n dat tree, but he's as hard-headed as er mule an' won't never pay no 'tention to what I says, less'n I'm in reachin' distance wid er stick. Soon as dat leg gits so he kin walk on hit, I'se er gwine to put him to wuck, helpin' to git dat garden ready to plant an' puttin out onion sets, 'sides spadin' up de ground on de sunny side of de garden fer er sweet 'tater bed."

As I left the back porch and entered my room, I heard Aunt Tilda singing in her high, shrill voice:

" 'Tain't er gwine to sleet,
An' 'tain't er gwine to snow;
'Tain't er gwine to rain an' hail no mo'."



Florinda, the Dusky Charmer

"Marse Albert, is yer got enny ob dem stomped antelopes in de pos' offis?" asked Uncle Mose, a faithful old darkey on the Briers plantation, addressing the postmaster.

"Stomped what?" inquired Mr. Howe, giving the darky a curious look.

"Why, one ob dem stomped antelopes what yer puts er letter in when yer wants to send hit to Macon, Georgia," answered Uncle Mose. "I dun promised Florinda dat I'd write to her, when I seed her in Natchez las' week, an' I'se bound fer to keep dat promise."

"I guess you mean a stamped envelope—is that what you want?" inquired Mr. Howe.

"Yassah, dat's hit. How much does yer charge fer one dat'll take dis here letter to Macon, Georgia?"

"We sell two for 5 cents, or 3 cents for a single one."

"How much does dat make one cost?"

"Three cents, providing the letter does not weigh more than one ounce."

"How much does yer charge to send er letter from here to New Yawk?"

"Same price to any part of the United States or Canada."

"How much to Natchez?"

"Same as to New York—2 cents carries a letter to any part of the country."

"Does yer mean to say dat de Government charges only 2 cents fer to take dis letter to Natchez, an' de same ef hit goes clear to New Yawk?"

"Yes, 2 cents will take it to either place."

"An' hit won't cost but 2 cents to send hit to Macon, Georgia?"

"That's all—2 cents."

"Is yer got enny pen an' ink in de offis?"

"Yes, got a little ink left. Do you want me to address the envelope for you?"

"Yassah, ef you please, kase my hand is kinder trembly lak dis mornin'. I hope yer don't make no mistake an' put de redress on de wrong side, kase dere's money inside, an' I'd feel mighty bad ef Florinda didn't git dis here letter. Ever sence I had de grip last winter an' de 'larial fever in de spring, I'se had er misery in my chist an' I'se bin kinder po'ly, thank de Lawd, an' I feels lak I needs somebody to cook my vittels an' tend to de house whilst I'se at wuck, so I dun 'cided to git married to Florinda."

"How do you expect to get married to Florinda when you have a wife and three children on the plantation?" asked Mr. Howe, sternly.

"My old woman ain't here no more—she dun lef' me an' went down to Hard Times to live wid dat bandy-legged nigger what comed up here las' spring when I wuz sick. Maria wuz one ob de bes' women on dis here plantashun befo' she sot eyes on dat rascal an' his \$2 watch an' chain, but de minit dat he 'gun to make eyes at Maria an' tell her what a nice cabin he had, an' how lonesome hit wuz dar, all by hissef, an' how happy he'd be ef she wuz dar wid him, to help him spend all de money what he wuz er makin', den Maria 'gun to sulk an' pout an' git ugly, an' de fust thing I knowed she dun hauled all de furniture down to de landin', got on de boat an' away she went, takin' de chillun wid her. I wouldn't er cared so much ef she had took up wid er nice-lookin' nigger what had enny sense, but hit sho' did grieve me to see her goin' down dere wid dat nigger what never could make six bits er day pickin' cotton."

"Have you ever been down to Hard Times, to see your wife?"

"Yassah, I went down dar once, but dat nigger drawed er razor on me an' dared me to go inside his cabin. I knowed dat Maria wuz dar, kase I seed her an' de chillun er peepin' through de window, but I wuz 'fraid of dat nigger an' his razor, so I dun turned 'round an' comed back to Briers. Last week, when I wuz in Natchez, I meets Florinda at her sister's house, an' she an' me 'cided we'd git married ef I could rake up enough money so she could come here from Macon, Georgia. I knows dat I'se bin kinder sickly an' no 'count, but Florinda knows how to make buckle an' tongue meet."

"How old a woman is this Florinda that you speak of?"

"She's quite er young-lookin' woman, but she's bin powerful misfortunate. Yer see, her fust husband got killed in er cotton press, an' befo' she dun quit mournin' for him her second husband got tried an' wuz sent to de penitenshy fer stealin' er hog, an' he's got fo' more years yet to serve befo' his time is out."

"What do you think will happen to you when the fellow is released and he finds that you are living with his wife?"

"I'se dun 'ranged fer all dat, Marse Albert. When dat time comes, I mought be glad to gin Florinda up to him, an' ef so, I'll jes' let him take her widout no fuss. Ef she ain't sickly an' I finds dat she is er likely woman to live wid, den befo' dat time comes I kin buy divorcement documents. I dun inquired into de matter when I wuz in Natchez, an' er lawyer dar tole me dat he would git de divorce papers ef I paid him \$30. Florinda's got er bedstead, er chist, an' fo' split-bottom cheers, an' er bolster an' er feather bed an' er lot er truck lak dat, an' all dat is worth more'n de papers will cost. I'se puffictly willin' to

spend dat much money on Florinda ef she suits me, kase I don't 'low to git married widout hit costin' me something. I dun gin her de 'gagement ring when I wuz in Natchez, an' I 'lows to buy her er hat an' er pair of shoes when she comes here."

"I always thought that you and Maria got along very well together, and that you were both happy and contented."

"So we wuz till dat nigger from Hard Times comed here—den Maria's head got turned 'roun' an' she up an' lef' me. I'se got to have somebody to patch an' mend my clothes an' cook my vittels, an' I knows dat Florinda kin do dat. Ef she'll jes' do her part an' keep de cabin nice an' clean, an' 'tend to de chickens an' de hogs, an' does de cookin' an' de washin', splits de wood an' totes de water, an' combs my hair on er Sunday, I'll do my part an' we won't have no trouble to git erlong. Of cou'se I intends to 'low her to go to chuch on er Sunday an' sit up wid de sick, an' eat at de same table wid me, an' I'd lak to know what er woman could 'spect more'n dat.

"Yassah, Florinda's er gwine to have er easy time ef she's er wuckin' nigger an' buckles down to de wuck, but ef she's triflin' an' no 'count, I'se er gwine to let her go an' git ernudder one. I hates to bother you, Marse Albert, but I can't write er nice hand lak you kin wid de pen, an' I'll be obliged ef you'll back dis here letter an' redress hit to Miss Florinda Jane Johnson, er widder woman, kear her brudder-in-law, de foreman of de cotton gin, Macon, Georgia."

"What is the name of her brother-in-law?"

"Don't ax me, Marse Albert, kase Florinda never said what his name wuz. I reckon she'll git de letter ef yer redresses hit lak I said, kase he's de foreman dere an' somebody'll know what his name is. Will dis here letter go up to Natchez on de Betsy on Saturday?"

"No, it will go to-night—the boat will be along about 8 o'clock."

"Will hit cost enny mo' ef yer holds hit back an' don't send hit till Saturday?"

"Of course not, but why not send it off to-night?"

"Well, yer see, dis am Friday an' hit's de thirteenth of de month, an' dat's liable to bring us both bad luck."

"How soon do you think Florinda will be here?"

"Oh, she'll start right erway, soon as she kin git her weddin' dress made, kase she's anxious to git here an' go to wuck."

"But suppose Maria should become tired of staying at Hard Times and comes back to you—what then?"

"I don't hardly think she's er comin' back, kase dat nigger dun cast er spell over her an' she can't leave him less'n he breaks de spell. Six months ergo I wouldn't er gin dat woman for no udder one on de plantashun, kase she sho' wuz er good wife an' one ob de best cotton pickers in Mississippi; but de minit she sot eyes on dat nigger I knowed dat he dun put er spell on her. Befo' she seed him she wuz satisfied wid milk an' mush for breakfast, lak we allus had; but arter she'd bin talkin' wid him she wanted pork chops an' beefsteak an' ham an' eggs an' fried potatoes an' coffee, an' when I dun told her dat we couldn't have all dat, lak de white folks has, she 'gun to sulk an' pout an' 'lowed dere wuz as nice fish in de river as dere ever wuz, an' dat she wuz gwine down to Hard Times to live. I dun my bes' to 'suade her to stay wid me, but she had her mind sot on goin' an' moved de furniture down to de landin' befo' I knowed dat she wuz in earnest 'bout goin'. I ain't got hardly nothin' but er mattress an' er bed quilt an' er shuck pillow to start housekeepin' wid, but I 'lows dat Florinda will bring her furniture 'long wid her an' we'll manage to git along somehow till de crap's in an' I gits squared up on de books. Ef dere wuz

er chance of Maria comin' back I wouldn't be so hasty 'bout gittin' married ergin; but dat nigger's dun hoodooed her an' she's liable to stay down dere er whole year befo' she thinks 'bout comin' back. Ef I had my cunjur bag what Uncle Zack gin me last spring I could make her leave dat nigger an' come back to Briers; but I lost dat bag in July, when I wuz er divin' fer Marse Frank's gun what he lost when de skiff turned over wid him, an' I ain't had nothin' but bad luck ever sence."

"What do you intend to do if Florinda doesn't come?"

"Oh, she'll come ef she gits dis letter, kase I dun told her dat I wuz waitin' for her, an' she'll come as soon as she gits her weddin' dress made. I wuz er gwine to ax you fer to write de letter for me, but Florinda's er smart woman an' she would er knowed right erway dat wuzn't my han'write. Now be sure an' put de name right—Miss Florinda Jane Johnson, er widder woman, kear her brudder-in-law, de foreman ob de cotton gin, Macon, Georgia."

"Did Florinda ever answer that letter you sent her when I was on the plantation last summer?" was the question I put to Uncle Mose shortly after reaching Briers in October last.

"Yassum, she sho' did," answered the old darkey, "an' she dun 'lowed dat she wuz er comin' on de next train ef I would sen' her \$20 fer to buy er railroad ticket an' git her meals on de way."

"You sent her the money, I suppose?"

"Yassum," answered Uncle Mose. "I took dat nice muley-headed heifer what Marse Frank gin me when hit wuz er sickly little thing, an' I sold hit fer \$15. De po' heifer's mother died when hit wuz only er week old, an' I took dat calf an' nussed hit an' fed hit warm milk wid bran mixed wid hit, an' last spring dat wuz de likeliest calf on de whole plantashun. I didn't git nothin' lak what de heifer wuz wuth, but

I wuz in er pinch an' wanted de money to sen' to Florinda, so she could come right erway. I had more'n er barrel full of pecans what I picked up in de woods; so I took 'em to Natchez an' got \$5 for 'em, an' dat made de \$20 what Florinda wanted. Arter she dun got de money she wrote me er letter an' said she would start on de next Monday, so she wouldn't reach here on er Friday, so hit wouldn't bring her no bad luck, an' for me to meet her at her sister's house in Natchez. I borrowed Jim Sanders' linen duster what he bought new last year when he got married to Julia Miller; Marse Frank gin me er pair of pants what wuz almost as good as new, an' as I had er purty good coat an' shirt, I went over to Aunt Tilda's an' she gin me some bear oil to slick my hair wid, an' den I goes to Natchez. When I goes to Florinda's sister's house, she hadn't showed up, an' her sister said she hadn't heard nothin' from her for er long time. Den she up an' tells me dat she wuzn't no real kin to Florinda no-how, but only her sister in de chuch. I waited er whole week in Natchez, but Florinda didn't come. I wuz powerful disappointed an' wuz mos' 'shamed fer to come back to Briers an' face dem niggers what wuz er lookin' fer me an' Florinda, kase dey dun heard me talk so much 'bout her. She sho' did wuck me fer dem \$20, but I wuz puffictly willin' fer to lose de heifer an' dem pecans fer to find her out. Ef I ever meets her I'll put de law to her an' have her 'rested fer takin' dat money, though she did look sweet when I fust seed her at her sister's house. She had on purty red slippers an' dese here open-wuck stockin's what looked lak dey wuz made out'n black skeeter nettin', wid er big red bow on de side ob her pompado', an' red ribbon er showin' through de lace waist what she wore, an' she told me what er fine cook she wuz, an' how she could fling er hot iron over de clothes what she washed white as snow, an' I got plumb foolish

over her an' 'lowed I wuz gittin' er treasure in dat woman."

"What became of Maria—is she still down at Hard Times?"

"No'm, she's back here on de plantashun. She comed back more'n er week ago, an' she wuz mighty nigh starved out, I'm here to tell you. I wuz powerful glad dat she comed back, kase hit's mighty hard fer er man to wuck in de field all day an' den, when night comes, not have nobody ter cook his supper. Dat nigger what Maria runned 'way wid dun beat her an' blacked both her eyes kase she 'lowed de preacher to bring her home from chuch one Sunday night. Maria couldn't stand nothin' lak dat, kase I never striked her in my life an' never 'lowed nobody else ter strike her; so she took de furniture an' de chillun down to de landin' an' comed up here on de Betsy. She didn't have no money fer to pay her way wid, but she told de captain dat she b'longed on Briers an' he 'lowed her to ride widout payin', knowin' dat he could git de passage money from Marse Frank enny time he axed fer hit. Yassum, Maria is happy as er lark an' sings all de time while she's er wuckin'; but she don't know how close she comed to losin' me an' findin' Florinda here in her place."



On the Plantation "Befo' de Wah"

"You Christopher Napoleon, ef you don't stop er wadin' in dat water in dem new shoes what Caleb bought you fer Christmus, I'se er gwine to skin you erlive, boy! You needn't think dat you'll git ernudder pair when you ruins dese, kase shoes costs money dese days an' yer gran'pa ain't got none to throw erway. Come right in dis kitchen an' take off dem shoes an' put 'em in front of de fire, so dey'll dry."

Thus scolded Aunt Patience, the faithful old cook on the Briers plantation, upon seeing her young grandson capering up and down under the eave of the house, where the water stood in shallow puddles.

"When I wuz er boy," remarked Uncle Jack, as he dropped an armful of wood and stood at the kitchen window watching the little pickaninnies, "my mammy sho' would er skun me erlive ef she had er ketched me wadin' in water wid my shoes on, kase shoes wuz shoes in dem days."

"Were they very expensive?" I asked.

"Yassum, dey sho' wuz," he replied, rubbing his hand over the top of his head, as though trying to recall old memories. "Durin' slavery days us darkies only had one pair of shoes er year, an' ole marsa allus made hit er rule to have 'em ready by Christmus eve. De shoes we uster git in dem days wuz made by er travelin' shoemaker by de name of Jones, right here on dis plantashun, an' he sho' wuz er fine cobbler."

"Why were the shoes not bought in Natchez or New Orleans?" I questioned.

"Kase dey wuz too high, Miss Sammie, an' de sto's in Natchez didn't have enuff of 'em to go 'round," answered Uncle Jack. "When we uster kill de beeves



"Durin' slavery days us darkies only had one pair of shoes er year."

in de fall of de year, de hides wuz sent to de tanyard at Natchez, an' when dey wuz tanned an' brung back here we had to wait till our turn comed fer to have de shoemaker stay here till ev'rybody on de plantashun, both white an' black, wuz shod. De cobbler made de white folks' shoes fust, den he'd begin wid de oldest of de colored people, takin' 'em 'cordin' to dere age, so dere wouldn't be no jealousy 'mongst 'em. Old marsa allus 'lowed de shoemaker to have all de hep he needed, an' as I wuz purty handy wid er shoe last an' hammer, hit fell to my lot, year in an' year out, to hep make de shoes. We would have de one what we wanted to take de measure ob stand on er flat piece of pine board, havin' 'em stand on one foot, so's to git de measure plenty long an' wide; den old Mister Jones would take er lead pencil an' mark de length an' de width on de boa'd. Whilst he would be er doin' dis all de darkies would be er playin' an' laffin' an' cutting up, kase dey wuz all pow'ful fond of new shoes, 'specially ef dey squeaked, an' de one what had on de squeakiest shoes on Christmus mornin' wuz de happiest one on de plantashun.

"For my part," continued Uncle Jack, with a merry twinkle in his dim old eyes, "I didn't want my shoes to squeak, kase ef I wanted to slip in er 'tater hill an' steal er few yaller yams, fer to roast, I wuzn't takin' half de risk of gittin' caught dat I would ef I had on creaky shoes. In dem days we wuz each gived er new homespun suit of clothin', underwear an' all, made right here on Briers, kase de hats wuz de onliest sto' boughten artickles we had, de wimmen folks cardin' de wool an' cotton an' weavin' hit into jeans an' linsey. Dey used de linsey fer makin' men's shirts and dresses fer de wimmen an' chillun, whilst de jeans wuz made into men's coats an' vests an' pants, an' I tell you, Miss Sammie, er suit made out'n dat homespun cloth, from de wool what wuz sheared from de sheep right here on de plantashun, would outlast half

er dozen of dese cheap sto' boughten suits what yer buys dese days."

"They lasted pretty well, did they?"

"Indeed dey did, kase I'se got er pair of blankets an' er counterpane now what wuz woven right here fifty years ergo, an' Aunt Tilda kin tell you dat she's got er lot er sheets an' counterpanes an' coverleds an' blankets dat she's had fer seventy-five years."

"Indeed I has, honey," interrupted Aunt Tilda, "an' dey ain't moth-eaten nor rotten nuther, kase cloth what wuz made in dem days wuz made to last. Well does I 'member de time when—Say, boy, didn't you hear what Aunt Patience told you 'bout wadin' in dat water? Ef you don't stop er splashin' dat water on dem chillun's clothes, an' come in here an' take dem new shoes off, I'll git er strap an' wear you out; now you mind what I say!"

"Tell him the Ku Klux will get after him if he doesn't obey you," I suggested.

"Dat would do ef hit wuz dark," answered Aunt Tilda, "but Christopher ain't erfraid of de Klu Klux in de day time. Never mind, boy—Aunt Patience will 'tend to you 'rectly."

"Well does I 'member dem good old days," continued Uncle Jack, "when de big room up over dis kitchen wuz de cardin' an' spinnin' an' weavin' room, an' whilst de wimmen would be makin' de wheels sing an' de cards fly, us boys would be pickin' de specks of trash out'n de wool an' cotton, pullin' hit erpart an' makin' hit fluffy, so hit would be easy to go through de cards. Dat's de way we uster wuck, makin' de long winter evenin's fly, singin' an' laughin' till de bell tapped fer us to go to bed. All of dem old reels an' de looms an' de spinnin' wheels is right up stairs over de kitchen now, an' ev'ry once in er while de wimmen folks has me git 'em down, so dey kin spin de thread what dey needs fer to knit de socks an' stockin's for dere fam'lies. I 'low dere ain't er cabin on dis

plantashun but what's got hits spinnin' wheel an' cards in hit, kase dere ain't many sto' boughten socks an' stockin's used here.

"In de fall, after de cotton am all picked an' ginned, de wimmen folks spins an' knits de socks at night, after de day's wuck am done, an' on rainy days, kase dere ain't one of 'em what sets down idle. Ef one draps down in er chair, for to rest after dey's had supper, dey grabs dere knittin' an' in dat way dey keeps dere fam'lies supplied wid good, warm woolen socks fer de winter, makin' white cotton socks an' stockin's for summer.

"Befo' de war," continued the faithful old servant, "each fam'ly on de plantashun wuz 'lowed to have er piece of ground in which dey planted tobacco an' popcorn an' goobers an' watermelons an' sweet 'taters, an' as de white folks uster take note of how well dey wuz wucked, each one tried his best to have er nicer patch den de udders."

"Were you permitted to sell the garden truck that you raised in these patches?"

"Yassum, we could sell all de stuff what we wanted, an' de most of us did sell de fust cuttin' of our tobacco, which was de best an' allus fetched er good price—sometimes as high as ten cents er pound. De second an' third cuttin's we allus uster keep for our own use. Many er moonlight night did my ole woman an' me wuck in our tobacco patch, weedin' an' toppin' hit, an' often we'd be up at daylight, ketchin' de big, green tobacco worms what wuz so destructive to hit, workin' an' watchin' hit till de leaves growed rich an' large. When de sap comed well out'n de ground, an' de leaves looked kinder limp an' lazy, we'd give it de fust clippin', den we'd cut hit twice befo' hit wuz ketched an' kilt by de frost, weavin' de stems in long ropes, or tyin' hit in big, loose bunches an' hangin' 'em under de shed what wuz built at de back of de cabin, to let hit git good an' dry an' cure hit. When hit would be

'bout half dry I uster take what I wanted fer chewin' tobacco, rollin' hit into twists 'bout six inches long, so I could carry hit in my pocket, den I'd let my smokin' tobacco git good an' dry an' crush hit by rollin' hit 'tween my han's till hit wuz right fer de pipe. We would allus gather nice, brown, dry fig leaves an' mix 'em wid de smokin' tobacco, kase hit would give hit er nice flavor an' make de tobacco last longer.

"In dem days ev'rything counted, an' we even made de lights what we used on de plantashun, kase we didn't have no such thing as coal oil den. All de lights we uster have den wuz made wid candies an' pine knots an' torches. You never seed nobody dip candles, did yer, Miss Sammie? I 'lowed yer never did, kase hit's bin er long time sense we made 'em here."

"Tell me how you used to make them."

"We uster fust melt from ten to twenty pounds of tallow on de top of er kittle of bilin' hot water; den de wicks wuz strung on er stick, an' one stickful after ernudder dipped in de melted tallow till de coatin' wuz thick enuff fer de candle. After de surrender ole marsa got some candle molds from er man in Natchez, but I allus did think dat de dip candles wuz de best an' gived er brighter light.

"At dat time cook stoves never had bin heard of, an' I 'member well when de fust one wuz brung here on er boat from Sent Louis. I don't 'member jes' what year hit wuz, but hit wuz three or fo' years befo' dey had dat big tornado in Natchez what blowed de roofs off'n de houses an' killed er lot er people. Ole marsa wuz in Natchez, sellin' some cotton, when de tornado stuck de place, an' I heard him tell yer ma dat he seed cotton bales er flyin' through de air lak pieces of paper, an' he said dat some of de bales wuz blowed clear 'cross de river into Vidalia."

"Tell Miss Sammie 'bout de fust cook stove what ole marsa fetched here," suggested Aunt Tilda.

"De fust cook stove I ever seed wuz brought here by er Northern man what wuz travelin' down de river in er shanty boat," continued Uncle Jack, "an' ef I 'member right, ole marsa paid er hundred an' fifty dollars fer dat one stove. De fust heatin' stove dat I ever laid eyes on wuz in er sto' in Natchez, but hit wazn't lak de ones what dey has here now. Befo' de war all de chuches had big open fireplaces at each end, and as nearly all de niggers uster go to de white folks' chuches in dem days, where dey had er place lak er loft for 'em, so dey could keep by dereselves, hit would git purty warm up whar we wuz. When hit would git too hot, some of de young bucks what would be er courtin' de gals, makin' sheep's eyes at each udder, would git up an' tiptoe out'n de chuch—den de gals would follow 'em. Ef we ketched 'em er strollin' off to de woods, arm in arm, an' asked 'em why dey left de chuch befo' de preacher wuz through wid de sermon, dey'd laff an' say dat hit wuz too warm up dere, an' dat dey wuz erfraid of gittin' overhet.

"I never seed er lump of coal till erbout '59, when I seed some on er steamboat what stopped at de plantashun wid freight. Dere wuz lots of timber on Briers den, an' dese old woods wuz so full of wild-cats an' hyenas an' wolves an' bear an' panthers dat hit wuzn't safe fer nobody to step outside yer cabin at night widout er gun in yer hand. I 'member one night, when I started for Aunt Tilda's cabin, to give her er nice rabbit what I ketched in one of my traps. Whilst I wuz er comin' through er dark strip of woods, singing' an' whistlin', so's to keep my courage up, I heard something what sounded lak er woman what had er knife druv in her heart, screamin' for hep. While I wuz er standin' dere, most parelized, er big panther jumped out'n er tree an' comed straight after me. Dat waked me up an' I runned faster den any deer you ever laid yer eyes on, kase I knowed hit wuz foot hep de body an' dat I wuz er goner ef I didn't git

out'n dat timber. I runned straight for Aunt Tilda's cabin, an' when Uncle Jackson heard me er comin' down de road, yellin' an' whoopin' loud as I could, he got up an' cracked de cabin door, so he could peep out an' see what de trouble wuz. I jumped clear over de fence, widout touchin' er rail, an' when I pushed on de door I knocked Uncle Jackson clear 'cross de room. Aunt Tilda wuz young an' spry den, an' when she seed me comin' through de door she grabbed er shovel an' most knocked my hade off'n my shoulders befo' I could tell her what wuz de matter.

"Yassum, de woods wuz chuck full of wild beasts den, an' ef er wolf got after you, an' you clumb er tree, lak as not you'd find er panther or er wildcat roostin' in dat same tree, makin' hit so dat er pusson warn't safe nowhar, on de ground or off'n hit. Dem wuz good days, though, an' we niggers uster have mo' fun den we does now, kase in de fall of de year we'd go nuttin' an' huntin' ev'ry Saturday afternoon, fetchin' in enuff nuts an' 'simmons an' wild grapes an' muscadines an' paw-paws fer to last us fer er whole week, 'sides gittin' enuff walnuts an' hick'ry nuts an' hazelnuts an' pecans to last all winter. All dat, wid de' simmon beer what we made, an' de popcorn an' de roasted peanuts would go mighty fine durin' de long winter evenin's. Dere wusn't er lot of happier niggers in de world den we wuz, kase ole marsa an' ole missus wuz kind an' good to us an' treated us right, an' dey made de overseer do what wuz right by us. Mister Johnson, de overseer, wuz er mighty good man, an' he's good to us yet, ef he is all crippled up an' has to roll hissself aroun' in er wheel-chair.

"I 'member de time when I wuz er sparkin' de gals, an' when I fust 'gun to call on Dilsie, my po' wife what's dade now. She wuz de purtiest gal on de plantashun in dem days, an' when we'd all git together on er Saturday afternoon, to go nuttin' an' huntin', me an' Dilsie would allus manage to git together, an'

sometimes we'd git lost off from de rest. I 'member once when we went out together, she in her best linsey dress an' me wearin' er clean hick'ry striped shirt an' homespun pants held up wid er pair of bedtickin' gallusses. I had bin er plowin' in dem gallusses all summer, an' dey wuz commencin' to git rotten, makin' me feel sorter jubious 'bout dere holdin'. I wuz mighty keerful not to put too much strain on 'em, but when Dilsie seed er tall, slim saplin', wid er grapevine runnin' all over hit, loaded wid fine grapes, she asked me to climb hit an' bend hit over, so she could pick de grapes. I furgot all erbout dem bedtickin' gallusses an' went up dat saplin' lak er cat, but when I got to de top an' swung off, fer to bend hit down, I found dat I wuzn't heavy enuff. I wuz er-danglin' dere above Dilsie's hade, so I hollered fer her to jump up an' grab me by de feet, to hep me pull de limb down. My old brogans had lots er mud on 'em, an' fer dat reason Dilsie jumped an' ketched me by de bottom of de pants. Zip—whizz! went de buttonholes as dey tared out'n dem gallusses, leavin' me wid nothin' on but my shirt! De minute Dislie seed what she dun she made tracks to whar her mammy an' de rest of de folks wuz, an' hit wuz two weeks befo' I could git dat gal to look at me, let 'lone speakin' to me."

"What did you do when Dilsie runned off an' left you er hangin' in de tree?" questioned Aunt Tilda, who was holding her sides and laughing heartily.

"Why, I jes' doubled up in er knot an' drapped to de ground," answered Uncle Jack, "but I got some of de boys what wuz out huntin' to hep me an' we stripped de grapes off'n dat tree befo' we went home. I gived what I had to Dilsie's ma, kase I couldn't git close enuff to Dilsie to give 'em to her, an' she—Aunt Patience, you'd better git er stick an' break dat boy's neck, kase he's wadin' in dat water ergin, in dem new shoes. Ef dat wuz my boy, an' he wouldn't mind what I tells him, I'd take dem shoes erway from him an'

make him go barefooted all winter. Come in dis kitchen, boy, befo' I scalds you wid dis hot water!"

When I went out on the porch I stopped a moment to watch a dozen or more of the pickaninnies in the back yard, some skipping the rope, some shooting marbles and playing leap frog, while one was "skinning the cat" on the rounds of a rickety ladder leaning against the smokehouse.

"You L-u-m-i-e!" shouted Caroline from her cabin half a mile away.

"M-a-'a-m!" answered the little darkey, balanced on one of the rungs of the ladder.

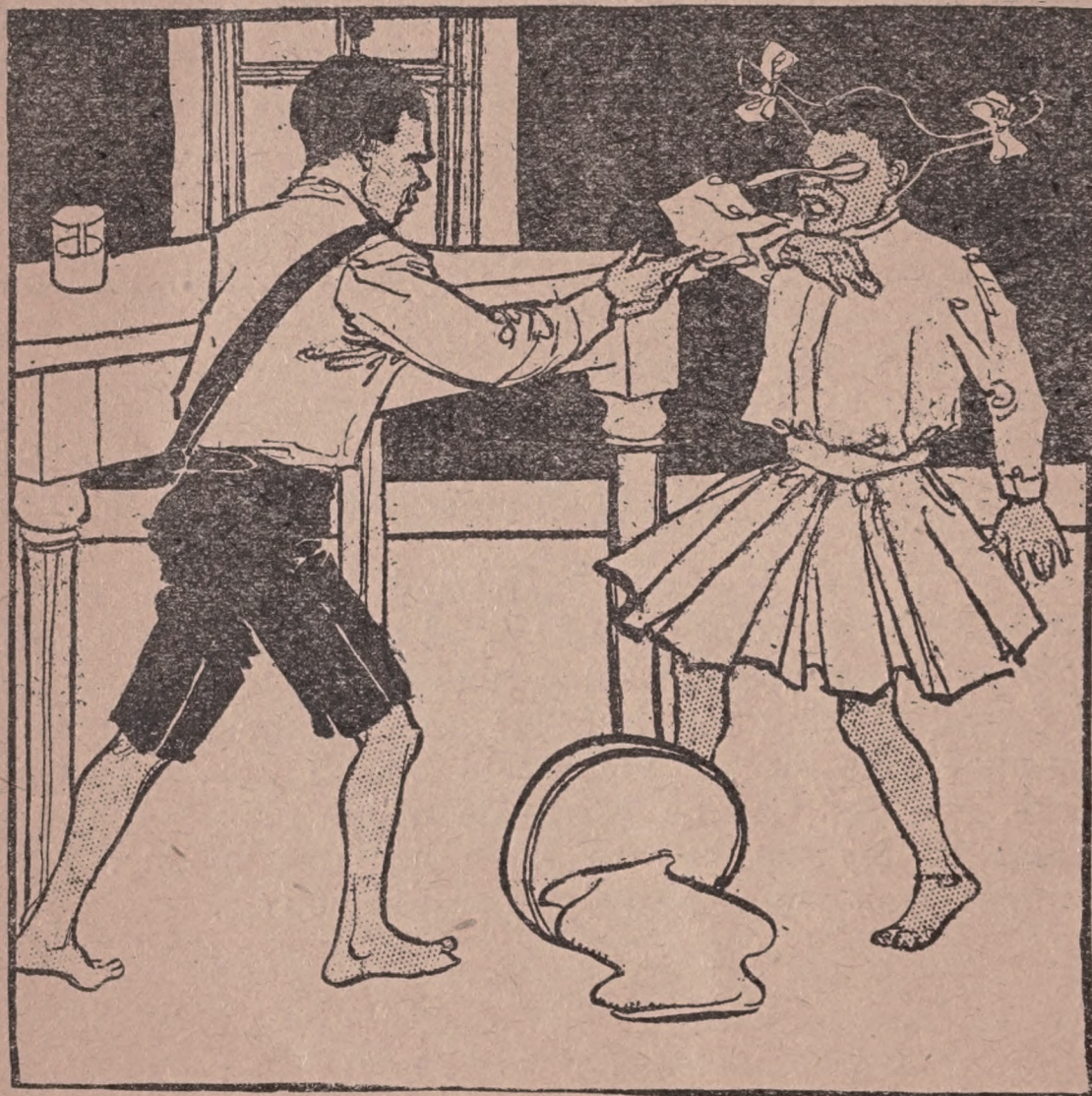
"Where's dat s-p-o-o-n?"

"H-e-r-e i-t i-s!"

"Fetch dat spoon here dis minute, boy! Didn't I tell you to leave dat spoon in de house an' quit diggin' dirt wid it?"

"For de Lawd sake!" exclaimed Aunt Tilda, sticking her white, woolly head out of the kitchen window. "We'se dun heard dat same tune fer de last fo' years. Sis' Calline ain't got but dat one big spoon, an' dat Lumie steals hit an' plays wid hit all day, till meal time, den Sis' Calline 'larms de whole plantashun, er-squawlin fer dat boy to fetch her dat spoon. You Lumie, don't you hear yo' ma callin' you?"





"Sis' Calline aint got but dat one big spoon."

Uncle Jack's Return to the Plantation

"I had just stepped from my room on to the broad veranda of the manager's residence on the Briers plantation, down in Mississippi, when I caught the fragrant aroma of parching coffee. Hurrying to the old-fashioned kitchen, I found Aunt Tilda sitting on the back porch, rocking back and forth in an old splint-bottom oak rocker; peeling luscious pears for canning, and singing:

"Snake bake er hoe cake,
An' set er frog to mind hit;
But de frog fell ersleep,
An' de lizard come an' found hit.
"De debil ketched de groun' hog,
Er-settin' in de sun;
An' kicked him off'n de back log,
Jes' fer to see him run."

Hearing my approaching footsteps, she turned her head and exclaimed, by way of greeting:

"Good mornin', Miss Sammie! How'd yer sleep last night? Yassum, I thought yer'd git kinder chilly befo' mornin' an' dat's why I left plenty of blankets over de foot of de bed. Hit jes' beats all how warm hit gits in de middle of de day an' how cold hit is befo' daylight, but de good Lawd's got er reason fer navin' hit so, an' we must bow to him an' take what he pervides for us. Don't dat coffee smell good er parchin'? Yassum, dat's right, kase dere ain't nothin' what smells half so nice as coffee do, 'specially when Aunt Patience gits hit good an' hot, 'bout half done an' jes' hot enuff so dat she has to make dat paddle fly fer to keep hit from burnin'. Yas indeed, honey, I'se

dun heard Miss Genie tell how dey parches hit wid mercheenery an' how dey packs hit fer to sell in barrels an' in sacks, but I hopes Marse Frank won't never buy hit dat way, kase I'd ruther smell hit er parchin' den I would fer to drink hit arter hit's dun bin made into coffee."

After chatting with her awhile, I entered the kitchen, where I found faithful old Aunt Patience, with her head tied up in a gay red bandana, bending over the huge oven, busily engaged in stirring the hot coffee with a wooden paddle almost long enough to row a skiff or dugout with—one that had been used by her for that purpose from time immemorial.

"I knowed dat de smell of dis here coffee would fetch you out here, honey, an' I'se glad youse comed," exclaimed Aunt Patience, as she continued with her work. "Did Aunt Tilda tell you dat Jack Ormsby's here? Yassum, he comed up on de Natchez last night, an' I'se bin er tellin' him 'bout you bein' here. He 'lowed dat he'd be powerful glad to see you, kase he said he ain't sot eyes on you sence you wuz er little gal. I reckon dat's him er comin' now, wid er armful of wood."

At this moment, Jack Ormsby, the subject of Aunt Patience's remarks came up the steps, bearing a huge armful of wood. I stepped behind the door as he entered and carefully deposited his load in the corner of the room.

"Howdy do, Uncle Jack!" I exclaimed, stepping from my place of concealment and extending my hand.

"Is dis here Miss Sammie?" he shouted, gazing at me curiously. "I do decla', chile, youse changed so dat I never would er knowed you ef I had er met you out in de big road. Lawd, Miss Sammie, you don't look er bit lak yer mother. Youse growed up to be er mighty handsome lookin' woman, but you sho' ain't as purty as ole missus wuz when she wuz er young woman. Yassum, she wuz young an' handsome

den, an' ev'rybody 'round here 'lowed dat she wuz de handsomest woman in Mississippi, barrin' none, an' ev-rybody up in Natchez took dere hats off to her, no matter whether dey knowed her or not."

As the faithful old darky reached for my outstretched hand and held it in a vise-like grip, the remembrance of the good old days on Briers before the war came back so vividly that his feeble old form, bent with the weight of more than seventy years, trembled with emotion and the tears gathered in his eyes, coursing down his black, rugged face, causing him for a moment to lose his voice in a choking sob.

"I tell yer, Miss Sammie, dere's bin er lot er changes on old Briers sence de war," he continued, wiping his eyes with a coarse, red-bordered handkerchief. "Lots of de people dat wuz here den has scattered an' nobody don't seem to know where dey is. Aunt Patience tells me dat Marse Bob is still er livin' down in Florida; Marse John is er wuckin' fer de Government out West somewhere; Miss Genie's gone to Louisville, an' er lot of 'em is buried in de old graveyard, never to rise till Gabriel blows his trumpet an' de angels come to bear 'em to dere heavenly home, whar dere'll be no strife, no sorrow an' pain an' sufferin', whar our sins will all be fergiven an' whar de wicked cease from troublin' an' de weary am at rest.

"Yassum, hit's bin er long time sense I wuz on ole Briers, but I'se here now an' I'se here fer to stay. When I got off'n de Natchez las' night, an' I wuz er walkin' up to Aunt Patience's cabin wid Uncle Caleb, he tole me dat you wuz here, an' I wuz dat anxious fer to see you dat I didn't sleep er wink all night. De last time dat I seed you in Natchez wid yer mother, you wuz nothin' but er little bit of er black-eyed gal, in short dresses, wid rosy cheeks an' long, black, curly hair tied wid red ribbons, an' here you is er growed up woman. My land, how de time do fly! When you wuz er little baby in de arms of yer black mammy, my wife

died an' wuz buried here on old Briers, under de big chestnut tree in de fur corner of de graveyard, an' ef you is er livin' when de Master calls me, Miss Sammie, I wish you'd see dat I'se buried right dere 'longside er po' Dilsey."

"When did you leave the plantation, Uncle Jack?" I questioned.

"I left here de fust time 'rectly after de war broke out, to go wid Marse Rob, wid Fenner's Battery, an' den I comed back wid Marse Rob when he got er furlough an' brunged me back wid him. Whilst we wuz here, we heard dat de Yankees wuz er comin' up de river wid er lot er gunboats, all of 'em filled wid soldiers, an' we all knowed dat dey'd do er lot er mischief ef dey stopped long enough fer to see how much cotton dere wuz stored in de gin. Some of de niggers what comed up on de river boats told us dat de soldiers wuz er raidin' de plantashuns 'long de river an' dat dey wuz er burnin' up all de cotton dey could git dere hands on, an' we knowed dere wouldn't be nothin' left after dey struck dis place.

"One night, when we heard de whistles of er lot er boats in de bend below de plantashun, your mother got de overseer an' er lot of de niggers what she knowed she could trust, an' had us hide er lot of de pervisions so's to have somethin' left in case de soldiers burnt de gin an' all de houses an' de cabins. Whilst some of de men wuz er loadin' cotton on de wagons an' takin' hit out in de canebrakes, fer to hide hit, de rest of us wuz goin' through de smoke-house, gittin' hams an' nice, fat middlin', fer to bury hit too. It wuz right over yonder in de main road, opposite de big gate, nigh dat big pecan tree, where we dug er hole in de road dat wuz as big as dis kitchen. A lot of us niggers spent more'n two hours carryin' pervisions—ham an' bacon an' canned preserves of all kinds—from de kitchen an' de smoke-house to dat place, whilst yer mother carried er pine

torch an' showed us what to take an' what to leave behind. After we dun toted enough stuff to fill dis here kitchen, we covered hit wid straw an' den threw on some dirt, smoothin' hit off nice an' clean, so dat nobody passin' long de road would notice what we done, den we dug er small ditch 'cross de place an' made hit look lak we had bin er fixin' de road.

"Dem soldiers an de gunboats didn't git up as far as Briers for er long time after we dun hid de pervisions, kase dey wuz sent back down de river to fire on some of de forts what wuz er botherin' 'em, an' dat gived us er chance to hide some more of de cotton back in de swamp. When de soldiers did come, dey camped right over yonder in dat cotton field, an' de gen'ral drove yer mother an' all de folks out'n de house, so he could use it for his headquarters. De minute dat gen'ral told yer mother dat she'd have to give up de house, she flared up an' told him dat she wuz gwine to stay in dat house till dey burnt de roof off, but Lawd, chile, er dozen of dem soldiers jes' picked yer mother up an' toted her out'n de house befo' she knowed it. Some of de officers pitched dere tents right by de place where we had de pervisions hid, an' de cooks went to wuck an' built er big fire right over de hole where we had de stuff buried."

"Where were you all this time?"

"Well, you see, I had on my old Confedrit uniform, an' Marse Rob an' me had to go back in de swamp, 'bout er mile back from de river, where we watched to see what de soldiers wuz er doin.' Sev'ral times whilst we wuz up in de trees, de soldiers passed mighty close to where we wuz, but we pulled de leaves 'round us an' laid low till dey wuz out o' sight. Although dey wuz widin' three feet of the stuff what we had buried in de road, none of de soldiers never found hit. Your mother made such er racket 'bout de gen'ral puttin' her out'n her own house, tellin' him dat he wuz no gentleman to drive a po' woman out'n

de only house she had, dat he put her on er boat an' sent her up to Natchez, but she only stayed dere one day—den she got er buggy an' had Uncle Caleb drive her back to whar we wuz, out in de swamp. We stayed dere for more'n er week, watchin' ev'ry move dem soldiers made, day an' night, an' when dey packed up an' started towards Natchez, yer mother went back to de old house an' had us clean it all out befo' she would live in it. Dem soldiers tore down all de fences an' used de wood fer to build dere fires wid, an' dey took mighty nigh ev'rything on de plantashun what dey could lay dere hands on, but dey didn't find no cotton in de gin.

“We didn't know what minute de soldiers might get whipped an' fall back on de plantashun, so we left de pervisions whar we had 'em hid for more'n two weeks; den we opened upde hole an' toted ev'rything back to de smokehouse an' de kitchen. Whilst we wuz busy on de plantashun, tryin' to git things straightened out after de troops left, we heard 'em er shellin' Natchez an' de next two days dere must er bin more'n five hundred niggers on Briers, what had runned erway from Natchez when de gunboats commenced shellin' de town, kase dey wouldn't give 'em all de ice dey wanted.

“Marse Bob wuz anxious fer to git back to Fenner's Battery ergin, so he took me wid him an' we struck out 'cross de country, goin' back of Natchez, he ridin' old 'Black Jack' an' me ridin' er mule an' leadin' ernudder one. We jined de battery at Meridian, an' I tell you, Miss Sammie, dere wuz er lot er fightin' after dat. Yassum, I wuz in some purty hot places, but dat fight what we had at Meridian wuz de hottest one dat I got into in de fo' years dat I followed Marse Rob an' de Confedrit flag. Marse Rob had three horses shot from under him in one day, an' whilst de shells wuz er flyin' over our heads an' all 'round us lak we wuz in er hail storm, he pulled off

his coat an' helped load de guns when de men wuz er fallin' so fast dat dey couldn't get enough to load 'em. Dem wuz de bravest men dat I ever laid my eyes on, standin' dere an' firin' an loadin' dem guns till one after another wuz killed or wounded, an' as soon as one man dropped out or wuz killed, another one took his place. I never saw such loadin' an' firin' in de born days of my life, an' ef any soldier ever crossed de line held by ole Fenner's Battery, nobody ever seed what became of him after he got his foot on de line. I wuz struck wid er piece of er shell what hit one of de caissons an' blowed hit up; er Minie ball went clear through my left arm, an' ernudder one struck me in de thigh an' is in dere yet. No matter ef I wuz 'most killed, I stayed wid 'em, ridin' on one of de limber chests, an' sometimes I rode one of de horses. When de war wuz over an' de men in de battery wuz mustered out, I wuz mustered out wid 'em, comin' home wid Marse Rob to Natchez."

"Where is your home now, Uncle Jack?" I asked.

"To tell you de Gawd's truth, Miss Sammie, I ain't had no home fer twenty years, less'n you calls de river my home," he replied. "Fer de last twenty years, I'se bin runnin' on de river, an' de onliest time when I got off'n de boat wuz when she warn't runnin'. Yassum, I'se bin on some of de finest steamboats what's ever traveled up an' down de river, as cap'n of de watch, seein' dat de rousters did dere wuck when we'd be er loadin' or unloadin' freight; helpin' de mud clerk git out de freight fer de next landin', an' seein' dat de rousters wuz ready to wuck when de pilot would whistle to make er landin'. I'se er gittin' 'most too old fer to be roamin' up an' down de river, an' feels lak I wanted to settle down somewhere an' stay dar. Dere never has bin er time dat I passed ole Briers plantashun but what I wanted to come back an' live here, so I thought I'd take er lay-off for a few days an' ask Marse Frank ef he wouldn't give me er

job on de plantashun. When I saw him this mornin' an' told him 'bout wantin' er job here, he told me dat I could go to wuck right erway an' dat I could stay here on Briers as long as I lived. He said dat he didn't have no cabin empty now, but dat I could have er room in Uncle Caleb's cabin, an' he'd build me er brand new one soon as he could git de lumber an' de shingles, an' furthermo,' he told me dat I could eat at de white folks' house, wid Aunt Mary an' Aunt Patience."

"What are you going to do—plow and pick cotton?"

"No, indeed, Miss Sammie, I'se er gwine to put on er white apron an' wait on de table; take care of Marse Frank's room an' see dat de fires is kept er goin', an' dat's all I'se got to do."

"How about your wife—is she coming to Briers too?"

"I ain't never had but de one wife, Miss Sammie, an' she's bin dade er long time. No'am, I'se never married no mo', kase I allus thought of Dilsie an' I knows dat she's er waitin' fer me on de udder sho'. I reckon hit won't be long now till de angels will come an' take me to Dilsie an' our little boy, up in de blue skies whar de tree of life am er bloomin' an' de streets am paved wid pure gold. Yassum, I'se glad to git back on old Briers ergin, an' dis time I'll stay here till de Master calls de roll an' I answers, 'Here!' "



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